

## DIVINE BEINGS

As Ravana abducts Sita and flies off with her, it is the brave vulture **Jatayu** who sacrifices his life trying to save her.

With his unparalleled devotion, **Nandi** gains immortality as Shiva's vahana.

The magnificent four-tusked elephant, **Airavata**, emerges from the golden egg of creation to become Indra's trusted vehicle.

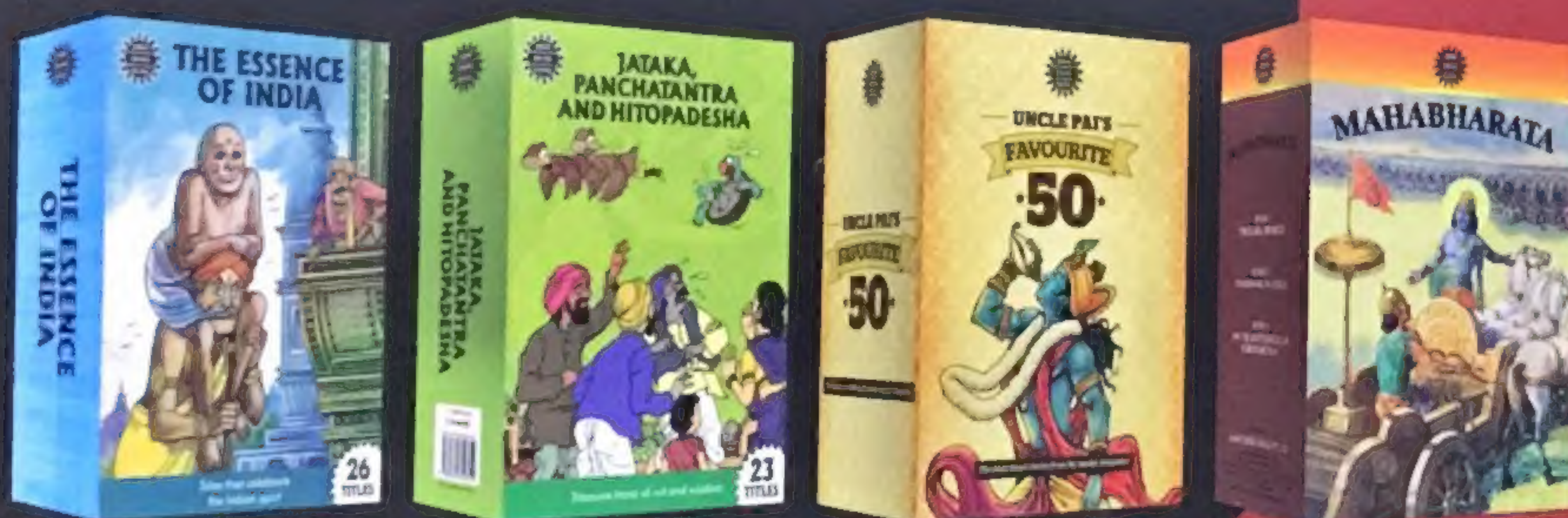
When Vishnu as Narasimha continues to devour and destroy the world, he takes the form of the two-headed bird, **Gandaberunda**.

**Shyama** and **Sabala**, the divine hounds, are given the responsible task of guarding Yama's gates.

These sacred beings of Indian mythology are endowed with strength, courage and beauty. And by their physical manifestation, as various birds and animals, give stature and respect to all creation.

The stories in this Amar Chitra Katha are taken from ancient texts including the *Shiva Purana*, *Vishnu Purana*, *Gajashastra*, the *Brahmanas* and also from folklore.

### OUR BESTSELLERS



₹ 150

[www.amarchitrakatha.com](http://www.amarchitrakatha.com)

ISBN 978-93-5085-454-9



"Amar Chitra Kathas are a glorious tribute to India's rich cultural heritage. These books have been an integral part of my children's early years, as they have been for many other families across India. Comics are a great way of reaching out to children, inculcating reading habits and driving their quest to learn more about our roots."

- NARAYAN MURTHY, CHIEF MENTOR, INFOSYS

SPECIAL  
ISSUE

AMAR CHITRA KATHA

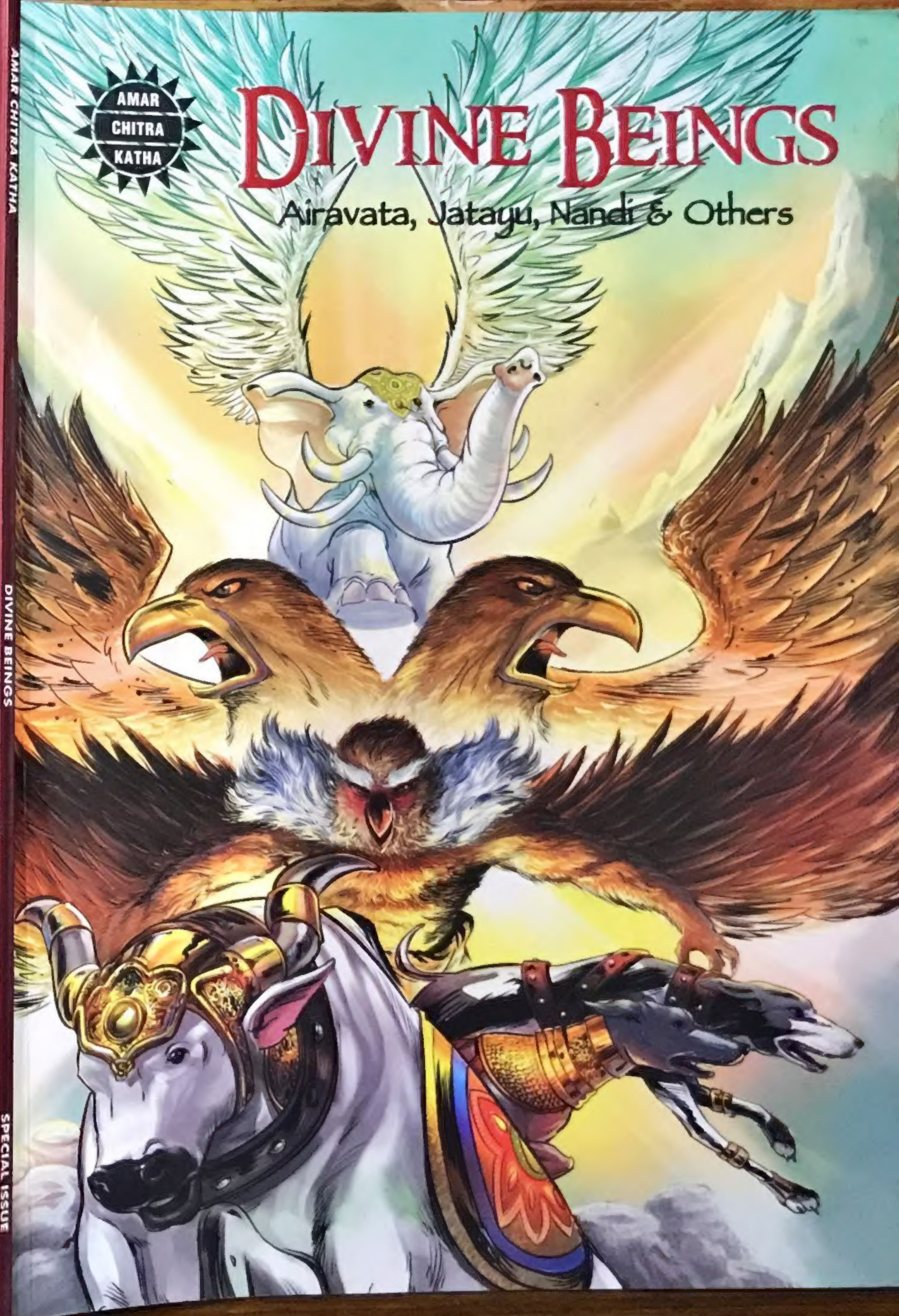
DIVINE BEINGS

SPECIAL ISSUE



# DIVINE BEINGS

Airavata, Jatayu, Nandi & Others







## Contents

Jatayu	3
<b>Script:</b> Nimmy Chacko	<b>Illustrations:</b> Arijit Dutta Chowdhury
Nandi	27
<b>Script:</b> Sanjana Kapur	<b>Illustrations:</b> Zoheb Akbar
Shyama and Sabala	43
<b>Script:</b> Aparna Kapur	<b>Illustrations:</b> Durgesh Velhal
Airavata	47
<b>Script:</b> Aparna Kapur	<b>Illustrations:</b> Durgesh Velhal
Gandaberunda and Sharabha	61
<b>Script:</b> Sanjana Kapur	<b>Illustrations:</b> Durgesh Velhal

**Colour:** Prakash S. and C. Ramesh **Special Text:** Sanjana Kapur and Aparna Kapur  
**Special Illustrations:** Adarsh Achari and Ritoparna Hazra **Assistant Colourist:** Silambarasan K.  
**Layout:** Sivajith S. **Cover:** Arijit Dutta Chowdhury **Art Director:** Savio Mascarenhas

**Editor:** Reena Ittyerah Puri

## JATAYU

MANY STORIES ARE TOLD ABOUT THE GREAT VULTURE, JATAYU. HE WAS THE SON OF ARUNA, THE SUN GOD'S CHARIOTEER, AND HE WAS THE NEPHEW OF GARUDA, THE MOUNT OF VISHNU. HE WAS A BIRD OF MAJESTIC PROPORTIONS, AND WHEN HE SPREAD HIS WINGS, IT SEEMED AS THOUGH THEY COVERED THE WHOLE SKY.





EVEN AS HATCHLINGS, BOTH THE BROTHERS HAD BEEN FOND OF FLYING AT DIZZYING HEIGHTS, CHALLENGING THEMSELVES AND EACH OTHER.



LET'S SEE WHO REACHES THAT PEAK FIRST!

AS THEY GREW OLDER AND STRONGER, THEIR RACES BECAME MORE FREQUENT AND DANGER-RIDDEN.



SLOW DOWN, JATAYU!

I CAN SEE THE WHOLE WORLD FROM UP HERE!

THEY WOULD OFTEN FLY UP TO MEET THEIR FATHER, ARUNA.



ARUNA, YOU MUST TELL YOUR SONS NOT TO FLY SO CLOSE TO US UNLESS THEY WANT TO BE SCORCHED.

I WILL, MY LORD.



MY SONS, YOU MUST NOT COME NEAR US.

IT'S DANGEROUS.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT US, FATHER.

ARUNA'S ADVICE WENT UNHEEDED.



THEY MAY BE RASH AND FOOLHARDY, BUT HOW SPLENDID THEY LOOK!

ONE DAY -



I BET I CAN FLY HIGHER THAN YOU, BROTHER SAMPATI!

HA HA, WE'LL SEE.

AND THUS BEGAN THE FATEFUL RACE.





THE TWO BROTHERS ROSE HIGHER AND HIGHER, THEIR WINGS BEATING FASTER THAN EVEN THE WIND.

OUR FOREST LOOKS LIKE A SPECK OF DUST FROM UP HERE.



SUDDENLY -

I'M STARTING TO FEEL A LITTLE TIRED, BUT I'VE FLOWN GREATER DISTANCES WITHOUT A MOMENT OF FATIGUE. I WONDER IF SAMPATI'S FEELING THE SAME... NO, HE SEEMS TO BE ALL RIGHT.



JATAYU IS GAINING SPEED! ON THE OTHER HAND, I FEEL QUITE TIRED AND BREATHLESS. AT THIS RATE, I WON'T BE ABLE TO STAY AHEAD OF HIM FOR MUCH LONGER.



SOON -

IT'S BLAZING HOT! WHERE ARE WE? MY THROAT IS PARCHED. EVERY INCH OF MY BODY SEEMS TO BE ON FIRE. MY BROTHER LOOKS EXHAUSTED TOO. WHAT IS HAPPENING TO US?



IT WAS SAMPATI WHO REALISED WHAT WAS WRONG.

WE ARE TOO CLOSE TO SURYA! IT MUST BE NOON NOW. NO WONDER THE SUN GOD IS SHINING SO BRIGHTLY.



THE GREAT BIRD WAS FILLED WITH PANIC.

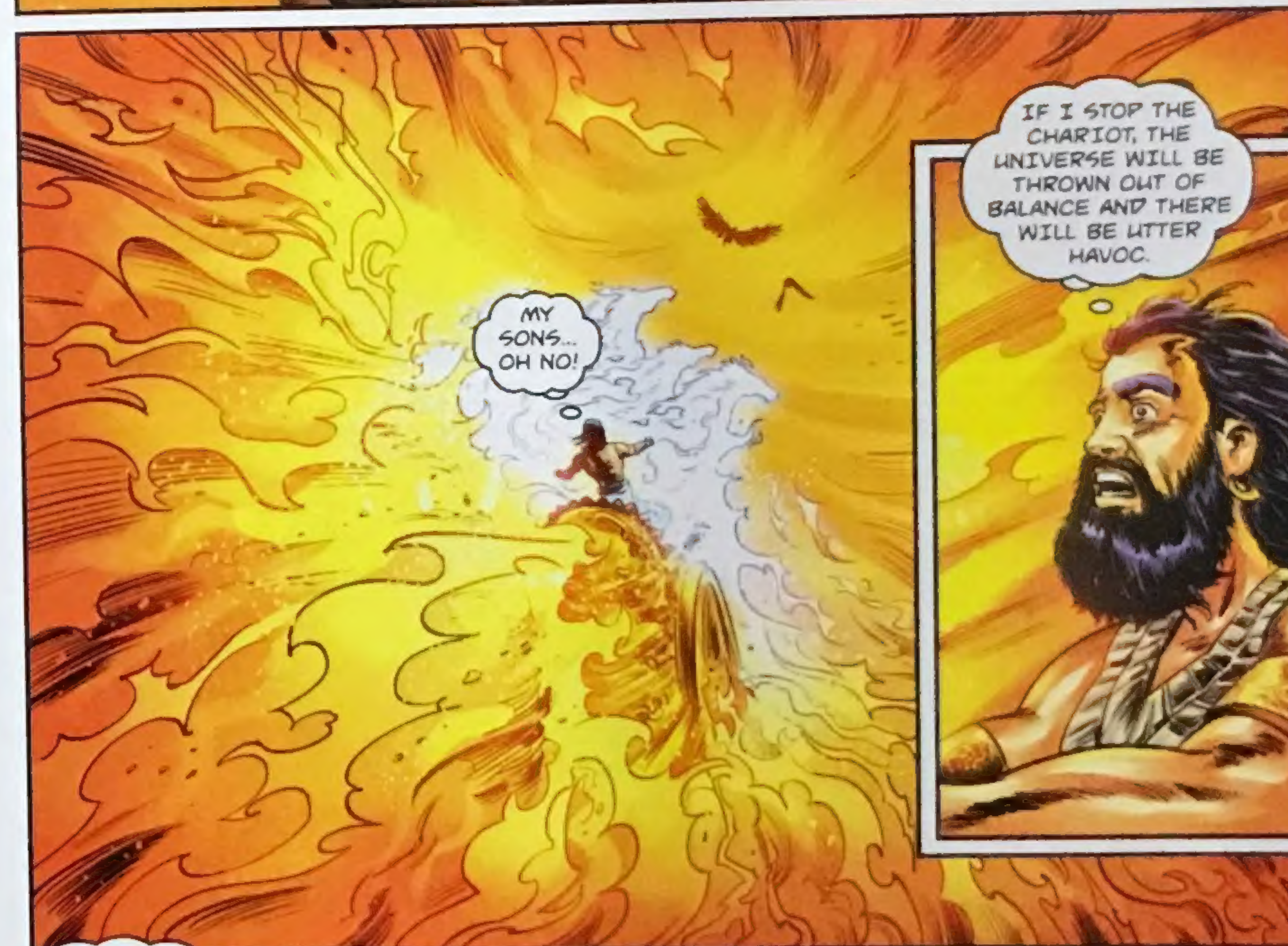
I CAN HEAR THE SOUND OF SURYA'S HORSES.

THE CHARIOT WILL BE HERE ANY MOMENT... IT'S TOO LATE TO FLY AWAY... WE'LL BE BURNT TO DEATH!

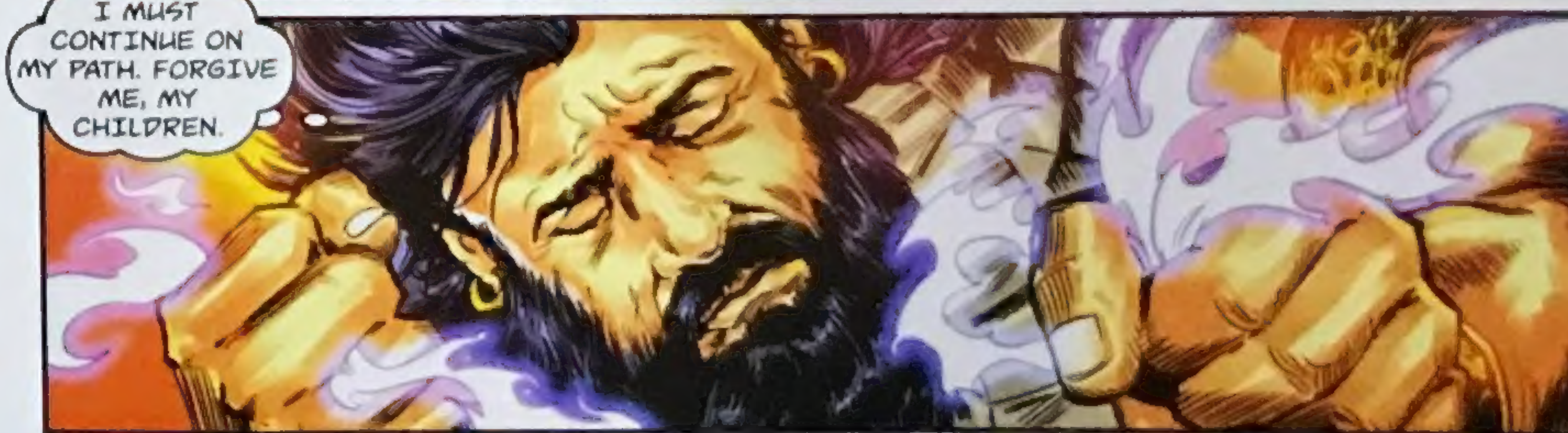


IF I STOP THE CHARIOT, THE UNIVERSE WILL BE THROWN OUT OF BALANCE AND THERE WILL BE UTTER HAVOC.

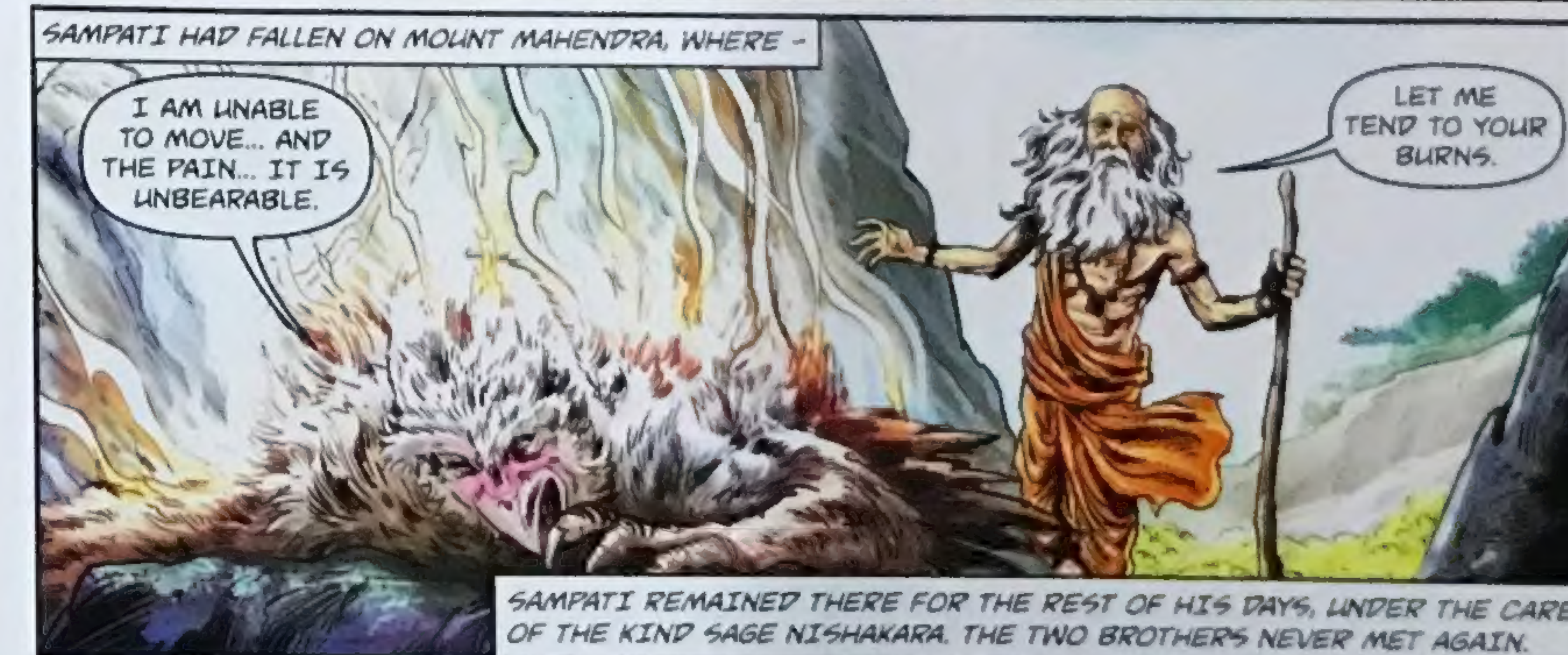
MY SONS... OH NO!



I MUST CONTINUE ON MY PATH. FORGIVE ME, MY CHILDREN.









MANY YEARS LATER, IN THE KINGDOM OF MITHILA -



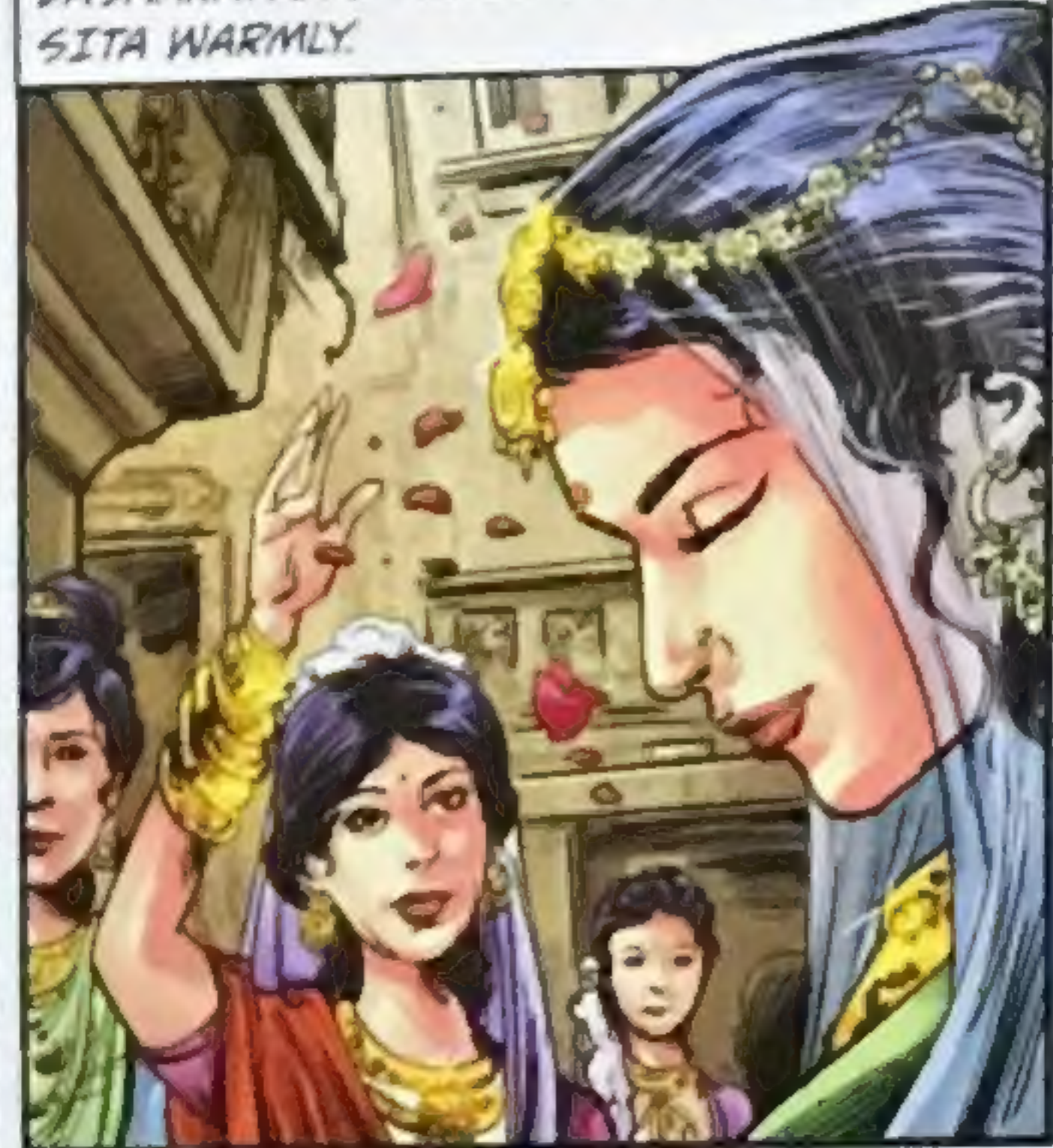
WHAT A BEAUTIFUL COUPLE THEY MAKE! YOU WILL AGREE WITH ME, KING DASHARATHA.

YOU ARE RIGHT, KING JANAKA.



RAMA, THE ELDEST SON OF KING DASHARATHA OF AYODHYA, WAS GETTING MARRIED TO SITA, THE DAUGHTER OF KING JANAKA OF MITHILA.

THE WEDDING PROCESSION REACHED AYODHYA WITH MUCH POMP AND GAIETY. DASHARATHA'S THREE WIVES WELCOMED SITA WARMLY.



SOON -



I HEREBY PROCLAIM MY ELDEST SON, RAMA, AS THE PRINCE REGENT OF AYODHYA.

THE WHOLE KINGDOM REJOICED AT THE NEWS...

...EXCEPT FOR ONE PERSON - MANTHARA, A MAID IN THE PALACE. SHE POISONED THE MIND OF KAIKEYI, RAMA'S STEPMOTHER.



HOW CAN YOU SIT SILENT, O QUEEN? YOUR SON, BHARATA, SHOULD BE THE KING. DEMAND YOUR RIGHTS!

AND SO -



MY KING, A LONG TIME AGO, YOU GRANTED ME TWO BOONS WHEN I SAVED YOUR LIFE IN THE BATTLE AGAINST THE ASURAS.

I WANT YOU TO GRANT THOSE BOONS TO ME NOW.

WHAT DO YOU WANT, KAIKEYI? I WILL NOT REFUSE YOU ANYTHING.

NAME OUR SON BHARATA AS YOUR HEIR, AND SEND RAMA INTO EXILE FOR 14 YEARS.

WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? HOW CAN YOU ASK SUCH A THING OF ME?



KAIKEYI REMAINED ADAMANT.

JATAYU

FATHER, I CANNOT LET YOU BREAK YOUR PROMISE. BHARATA IS AS WORTHY OF THE THRONE AS I AM.

I WILL DO AS MOTHER WISHES AND GO INTO EXILE.

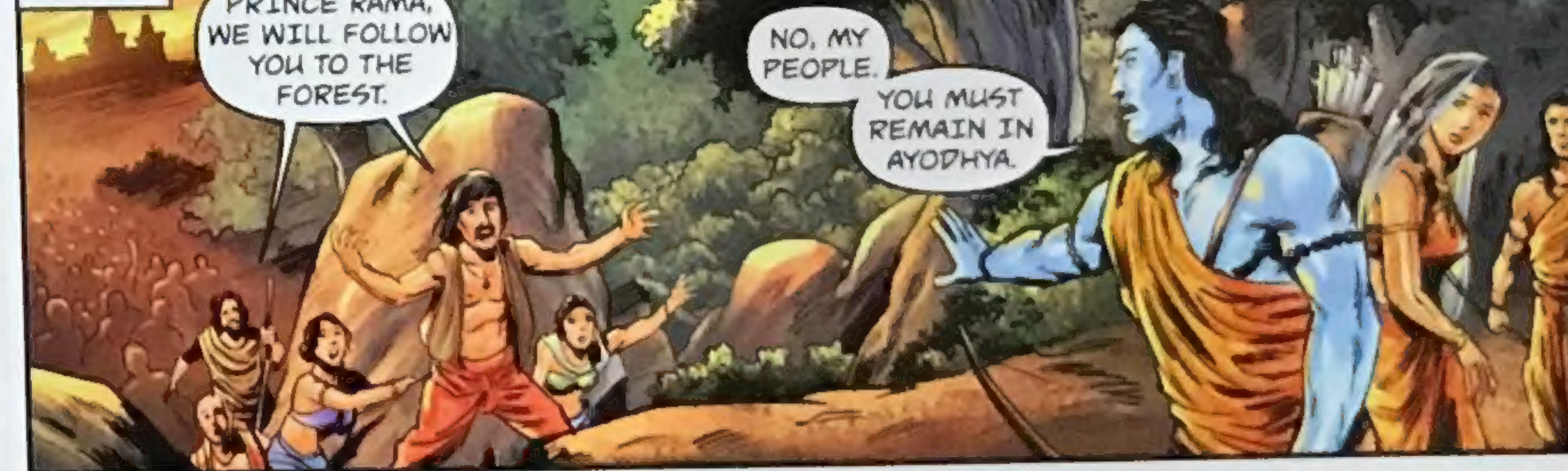


MY PLACE IS BY YOUR SIDE.

SO IS MINE, BROTHER.



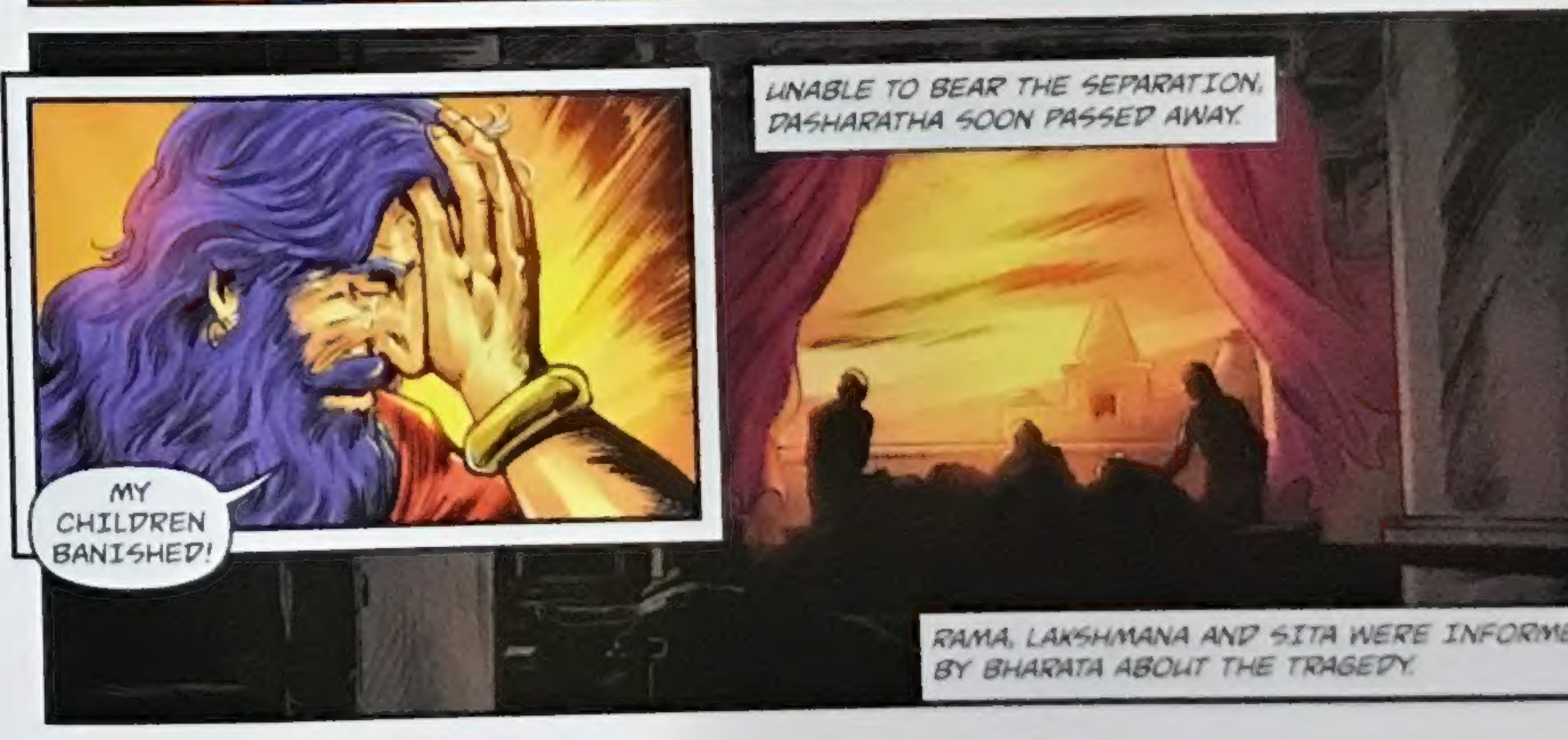
AND SO -



PRINCE RAMA, WE WILL FOLLOW YOU TO THE FOREST.

NO, MY PEOPLE.

YOU MUST REMAIN IN AYODHYA.



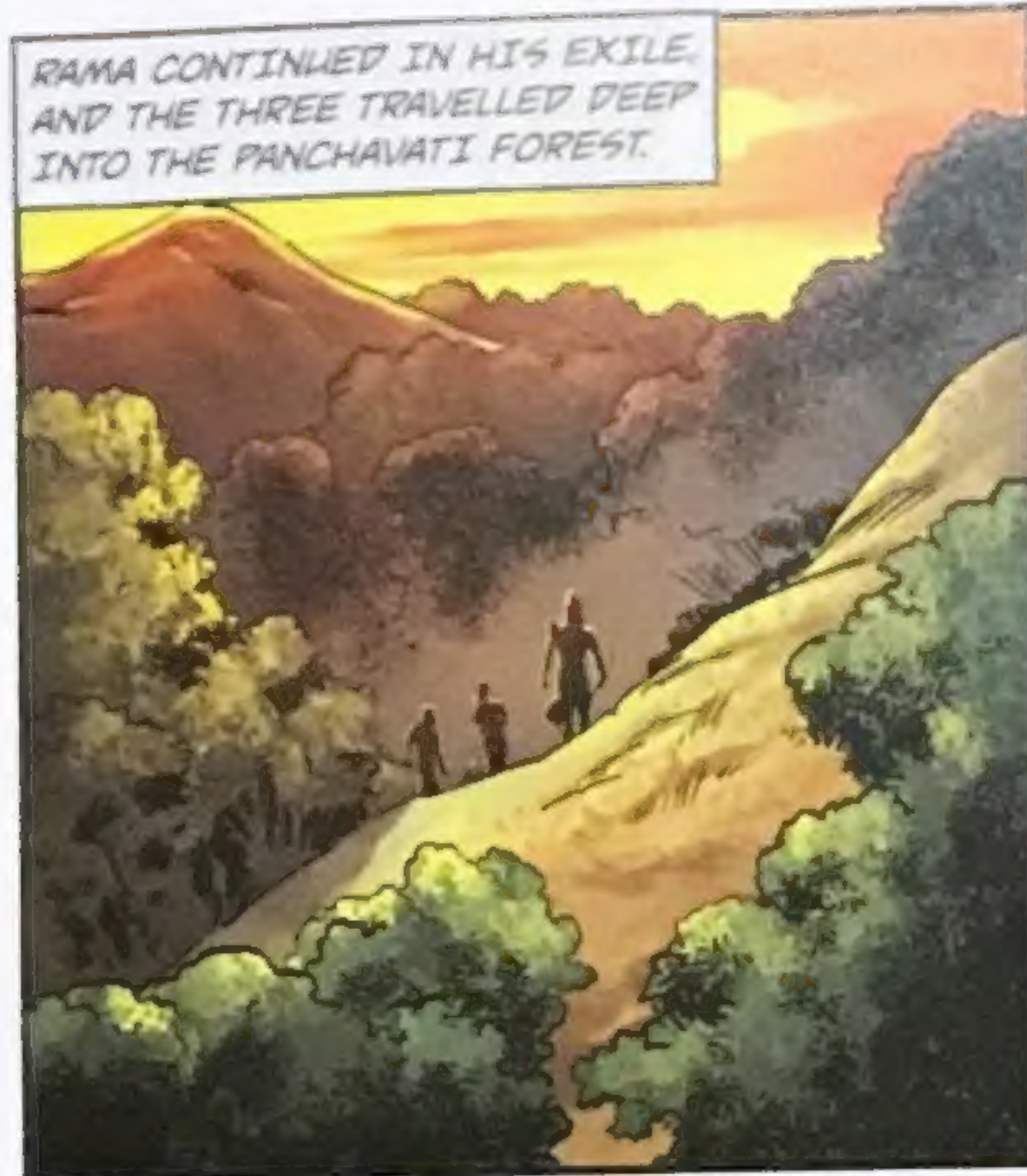
UNABLE TO BEAR THE SEPARATION, DASHARATHA SOON PASSED AWAY.

MY CHILDREN BANISHED!

RAMA, LAKSHMANA AND SITA WERE INFORMED BY BHARATA ABOUT THE TRAGEDY.



RAMA CONTINUED IN HIS EXILE, AND THE THREE TRAVELLED DEEP INTO THE PANCHAVATI FOREST.



ONE DAY -

I HAVE NEVER SEEN A BIRD OF SUCH GIGANTIC PROPORTIONS.

WHY, IT'S AS BIG AS A HILLOCK!

BEWARE, BROTHER! IT COULD BE A RAKSHASA IN THE GUISE OF A VULTURE.



DO NOT BE AFRAID. MY NAME IS JATAYU. YOU MUST BE THE SONS OF DASHARATHA... YOU LOOK SO MUCH LIKE HIM.

YOU KNEW OUR FATHER?

OH YES! WE WERE DEAR FRIENDS.

TELL ME, HOW IS HE?

OUR FATHER IS NO MORE.

RAMA TOLD JATAYU THE STORY OF THEIR EXILE FROM AYODHYA.

I CANNOT BELIEVE MY DEAR FRIEND IS GONE.

IF ONLY I COULD HAVE MET HIM ONE LAST TIME.

TELL US HOW YOU MET OUR FATHER, GREAT BIRD



JATAYU TOLD THEM THE STORY.

A LONG TIME AGO, A FEARSOME DROUGHT STRUCK AYODHYA.



THE RAINS HAVE FAILED US. THERE WILL BE NO HARVEST THIS YEAR.

HOW WILL WE FEED OUR CHILDREN?



JUST A LITTLE MORE RICE, MOTHER.

NO, WE HAVE TO SAVE A MOUTHFUL FOR YOUR FATHER.



O KING, OUR CHILDREN ARE STARVING. SAVE US FROM THIS TERRIBLE FAMINE!

I PROMISE YOU, I WILL FIND A WAY.





"DASHARATHA CONSULTED THE ROYAL PRIESTS."

WHY ARE WE BEING PUNISHED LIKE THIS? HAVE I OFFENDED SOME GOD?

LORD SHANI'S EVIL EYE IS UPON AYODHYA.

THEN I WILL FLY TO THE HEAVENS AND SEEK SHANI OUT. I WILL BEG HIM TO PUT AN END TO OUR SUFFERING.

YOU MUST BE VERY CAREFUL, YOUR MAJESTY.

IF LORD SHANI'S EYE FALLS ON YOU, YOU WILL BE KILLED.

"DASHARATHA SET OUT."

"SHANI SENSED DASHARATHA APPROACHING HIM."

DASHARATHA IS COMING TO MEET ME! I CANNOT LET HIM GET CLOSE TO ME. I PROMISED BRAHMA I WOULD NOT CAST MY EYE ON ANY LIVING CREATURE.

"SHANI FLEW FASTER."

THERE HE IS!







"I MANAGED TO CATCH YOUR FATHER AS HE FELL."



YOU ARE SAFE NOW.



WHO ARE YOU, O GREAT BIRD?

MY NAME IS JATAYU. I AM THE BROTHER OF SAMPATI, THE KING OF BIRDS, AND THE SON OF ARUNA, THE SUN GOD'S CHARIOTEER.

MY UNCLE IS GARUDA, THE MOUNT OF VISHNU.



I'M INDEBTED TO YOU FOR LIFE.



I HAVE HEARD MANY STORIES ABOUT YOUR COURAGE AND WISDOM, DASHARATHA. I COULD NOT HAVE LET YOU PLUMMET TO YOUR DEATH.

BUT TELL ME, O KING, WHY WERE YOU CHASING SHANI?

MY KINGDOM HAS BEEN STRUCK BY A GREAT FAMINE. MY PEOPLE ARE STARVING. IT IS ALL BECAUSE SHANI'S EVIL EYE IS UPON AYODHYA.



DASHARATHA, YOU ALMOST LOST YOUR LIFE PURSUING SHANI. YOUR CHARIOT IS IN FLAMES. CLIMB ON TO MY BACK, AND I WILL TAKE YOU HOME.

HOW CAN I GO BACK TO AYODHYA, HAVING FAILED IN MY TASK?



JUST THEN -

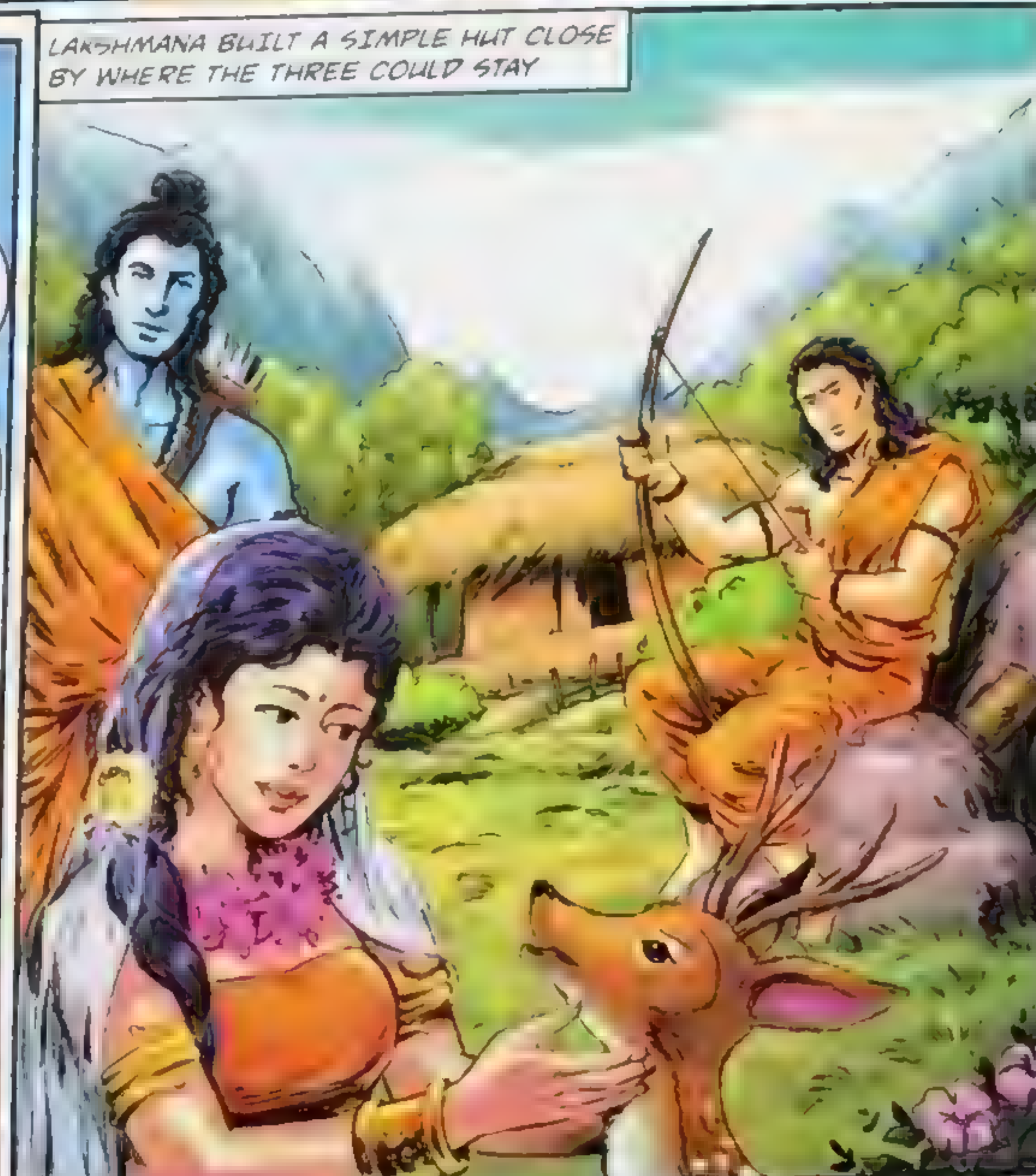
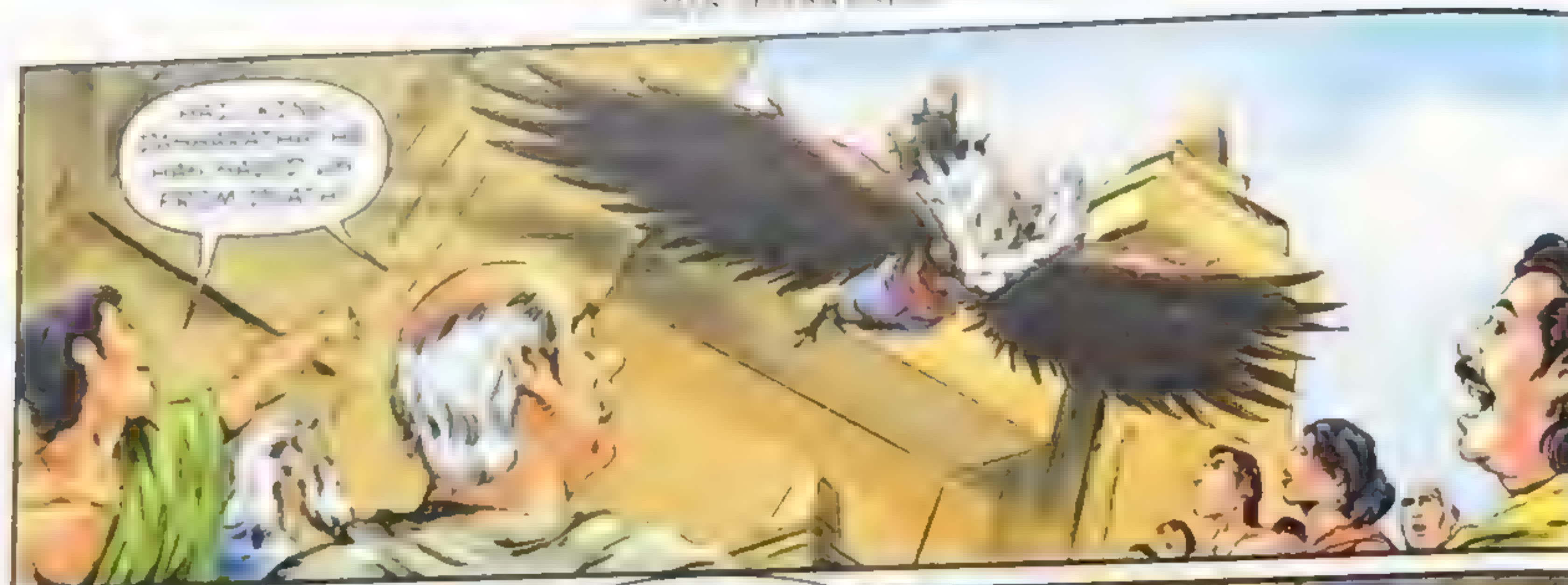
I HAVE NEVER WITNESSED SUCH VALOUR. I PROMISE YOU, AYODHYA WILL NOT SUFFER ANYMORE.



SHANI DEV!

I THANK YOU, LORD.





ONE DAY, WHEN RAMA AND LAKSHMANA WERE OUT -

WILL YOU GIVE ME SOMETHING TO EAT?

YES, OF COURSE, REVERED SIR

BUT -

HA HA! YOU ARE MINE NOW!

NO! LET ME GO!

IT WAS RAVANA, THE DEMON KING OF LANKA IN DISGUISE

DRAWING SITA INTO HIS CHARIOT, RAVANA TOOK OFF INTO THE SKIES.

HELP! SOMEBODY, PLEASE SAVE ME!

THAT'S SITA'S VOICE!

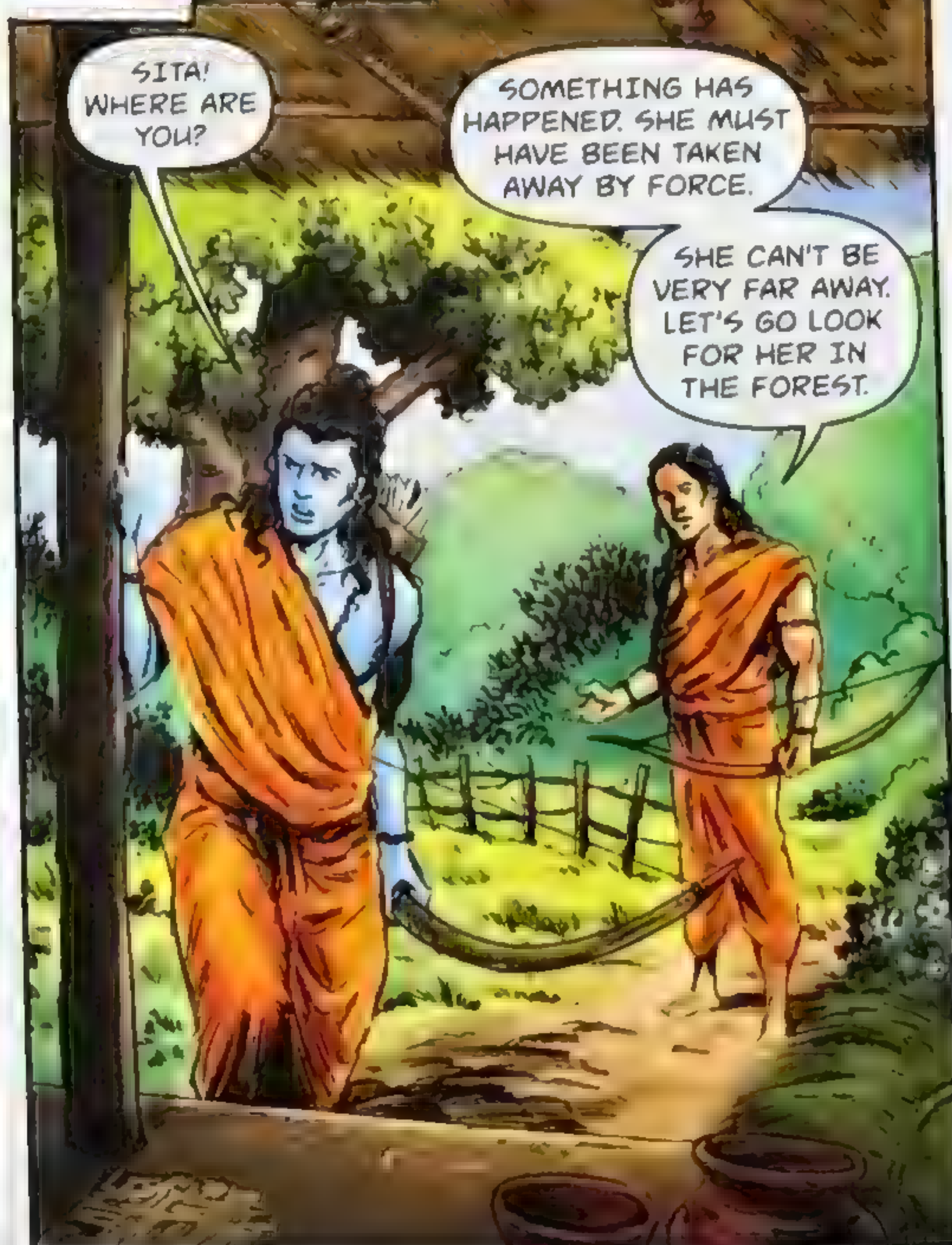




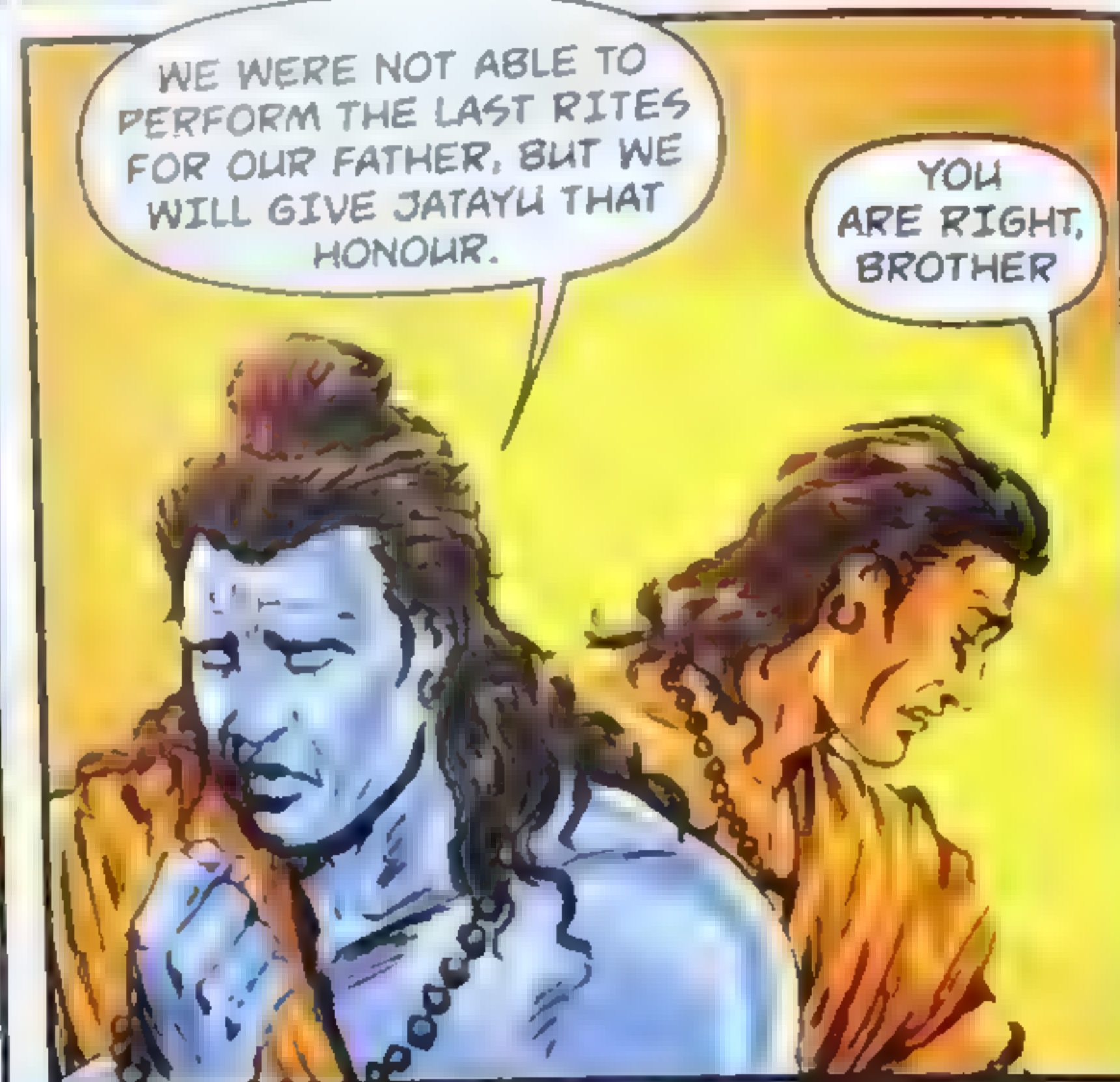




MEANWHILE -









FINALLY EARLY ONE MORNING



THE NEXT MORNING AS SHILADA PLOUGHED THE LAND NEAR HIS ASHRAM -



\*ONE WHO BRINGS JOY

NANDI

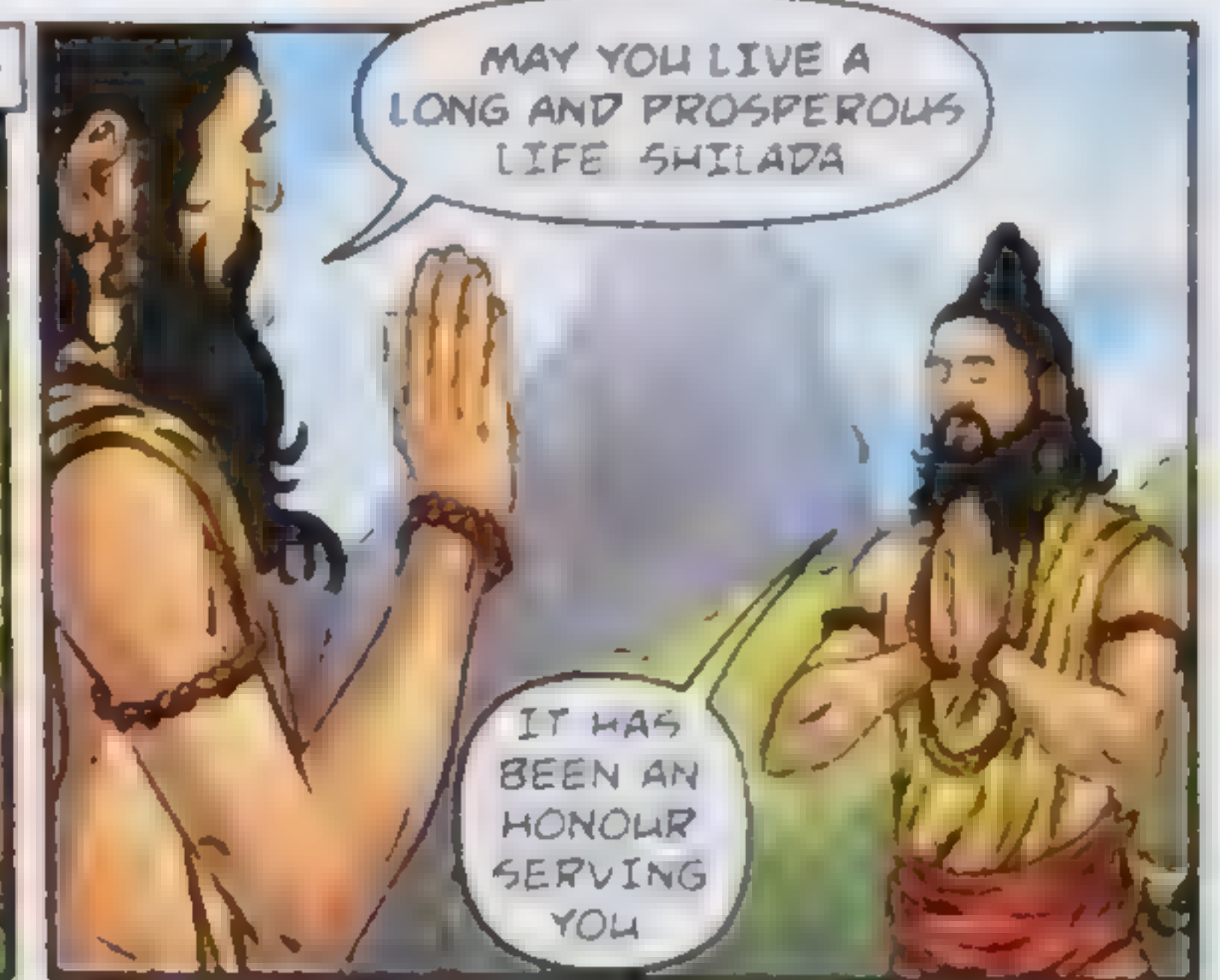
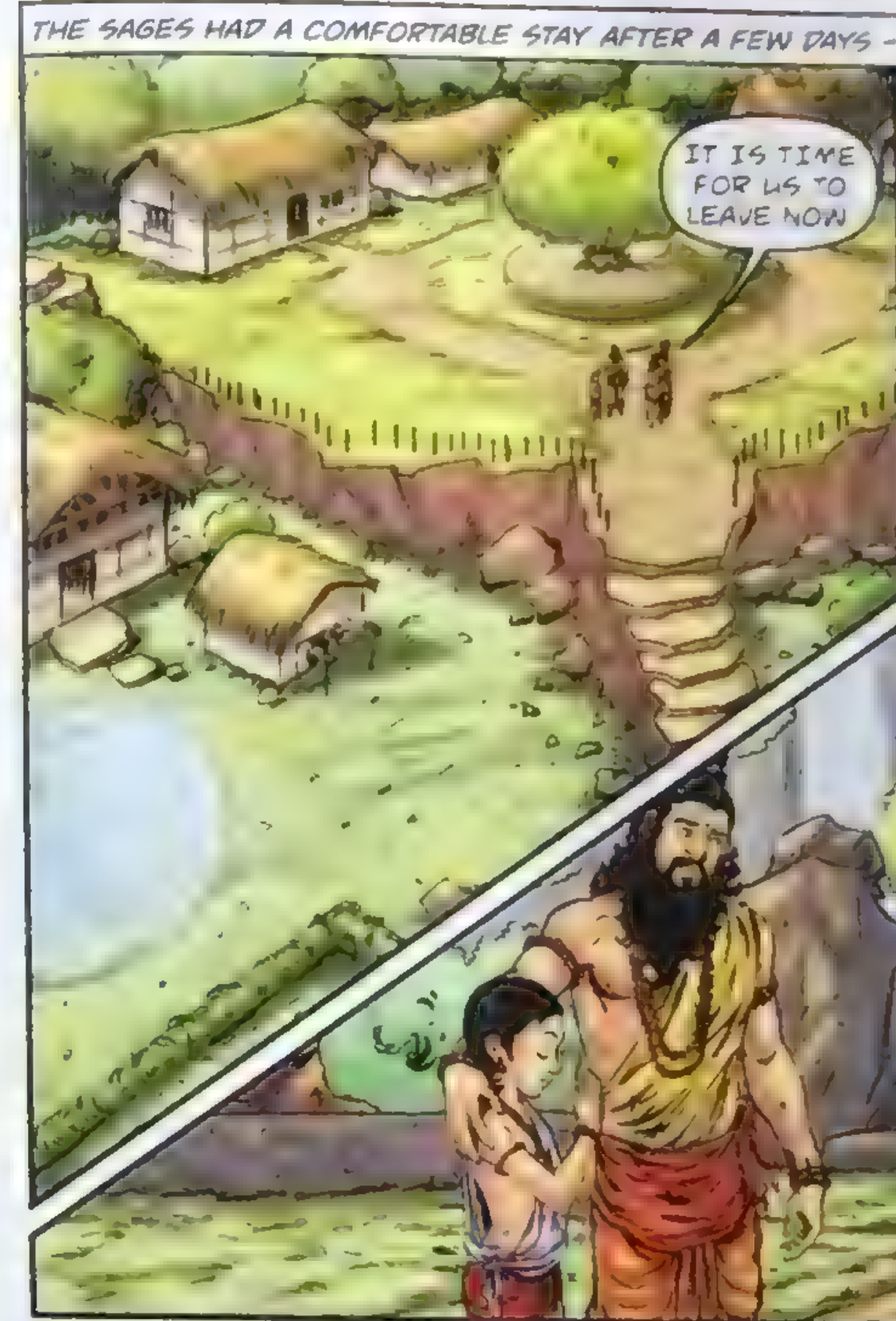
SHILADA TAUGHT NANDI EVERYTHING HE KNEW.



ONE DAY, TWO SAGES, MITRA AND VARUNA, CAME TO VISIT SHILADA'S ASHRAM



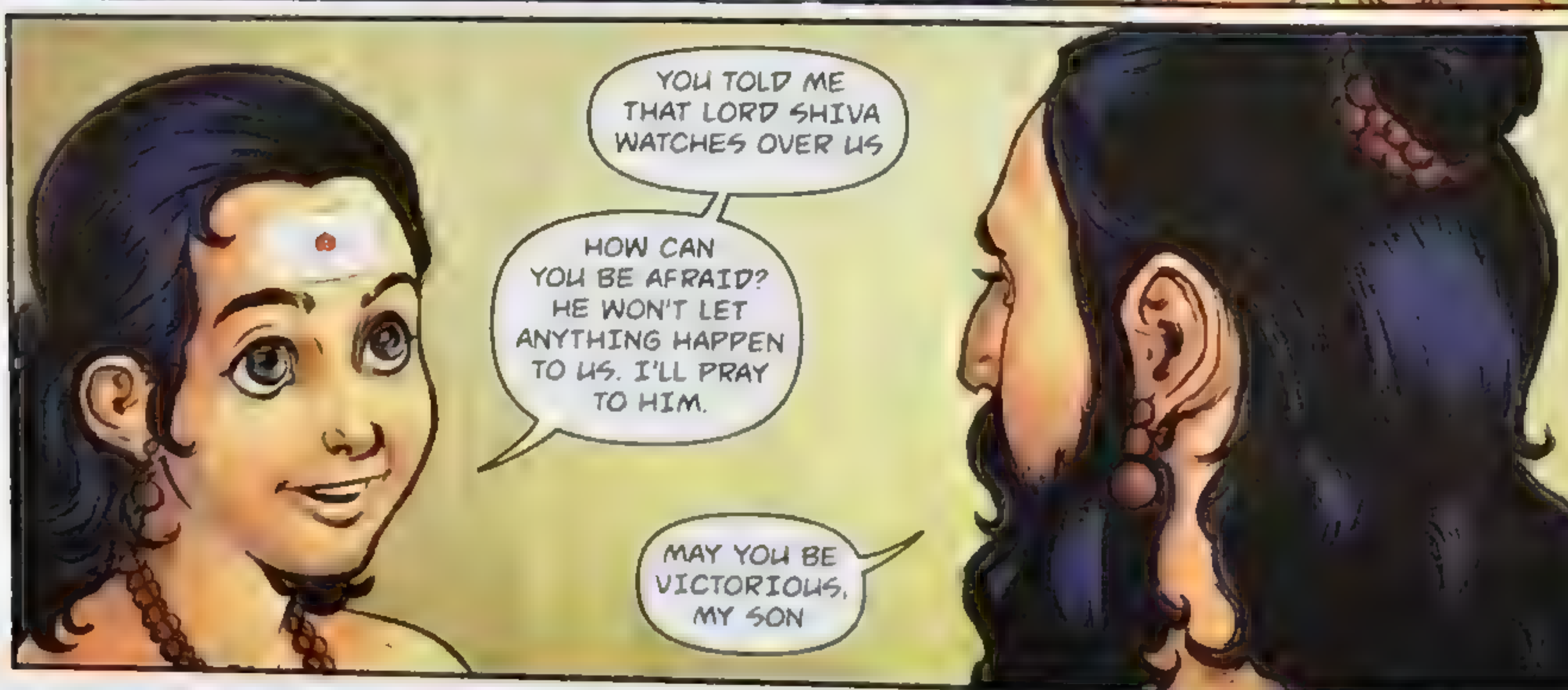




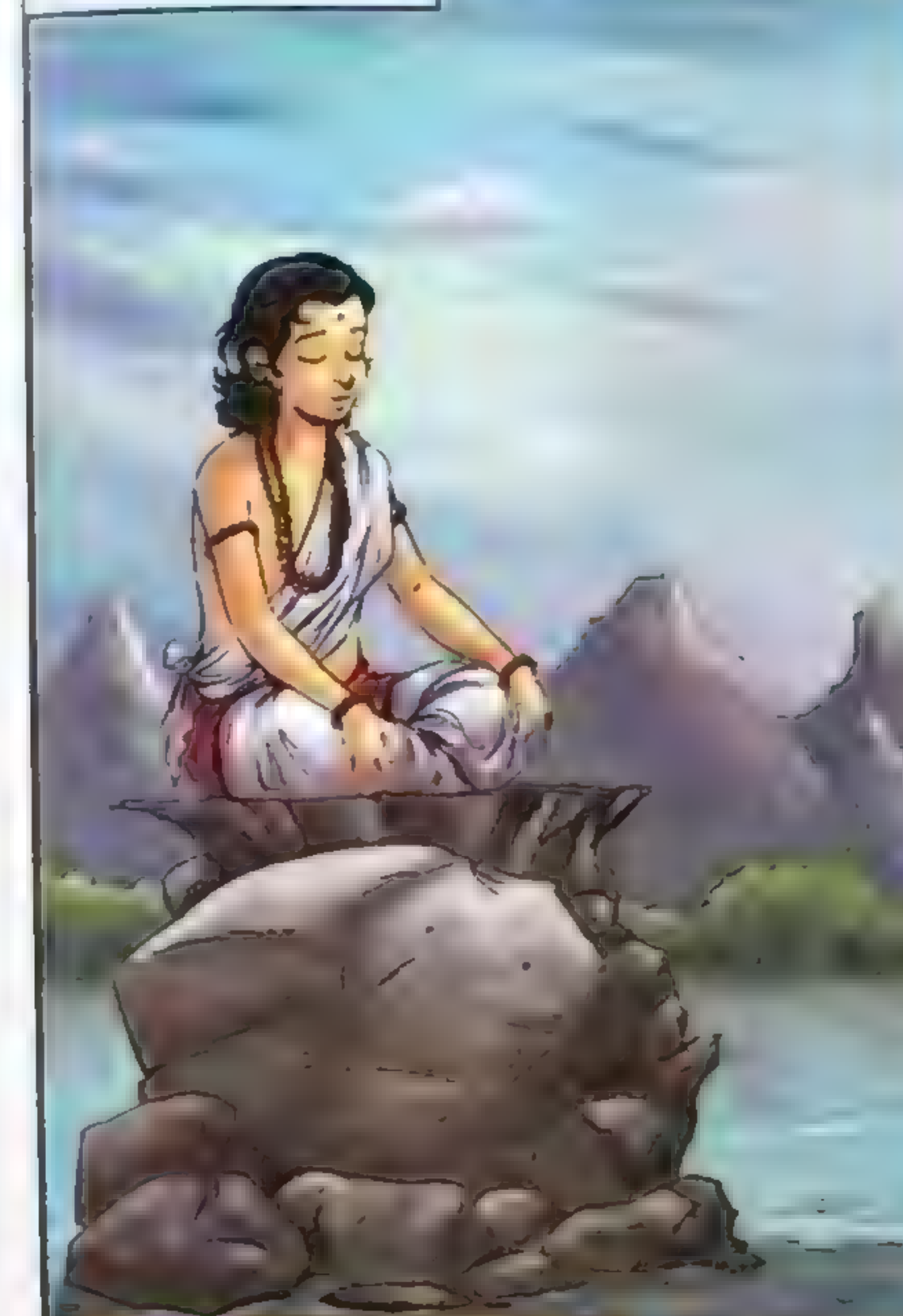




SHILADA TOLD NANDI WHAT THE SAGES HAD FORESEEN



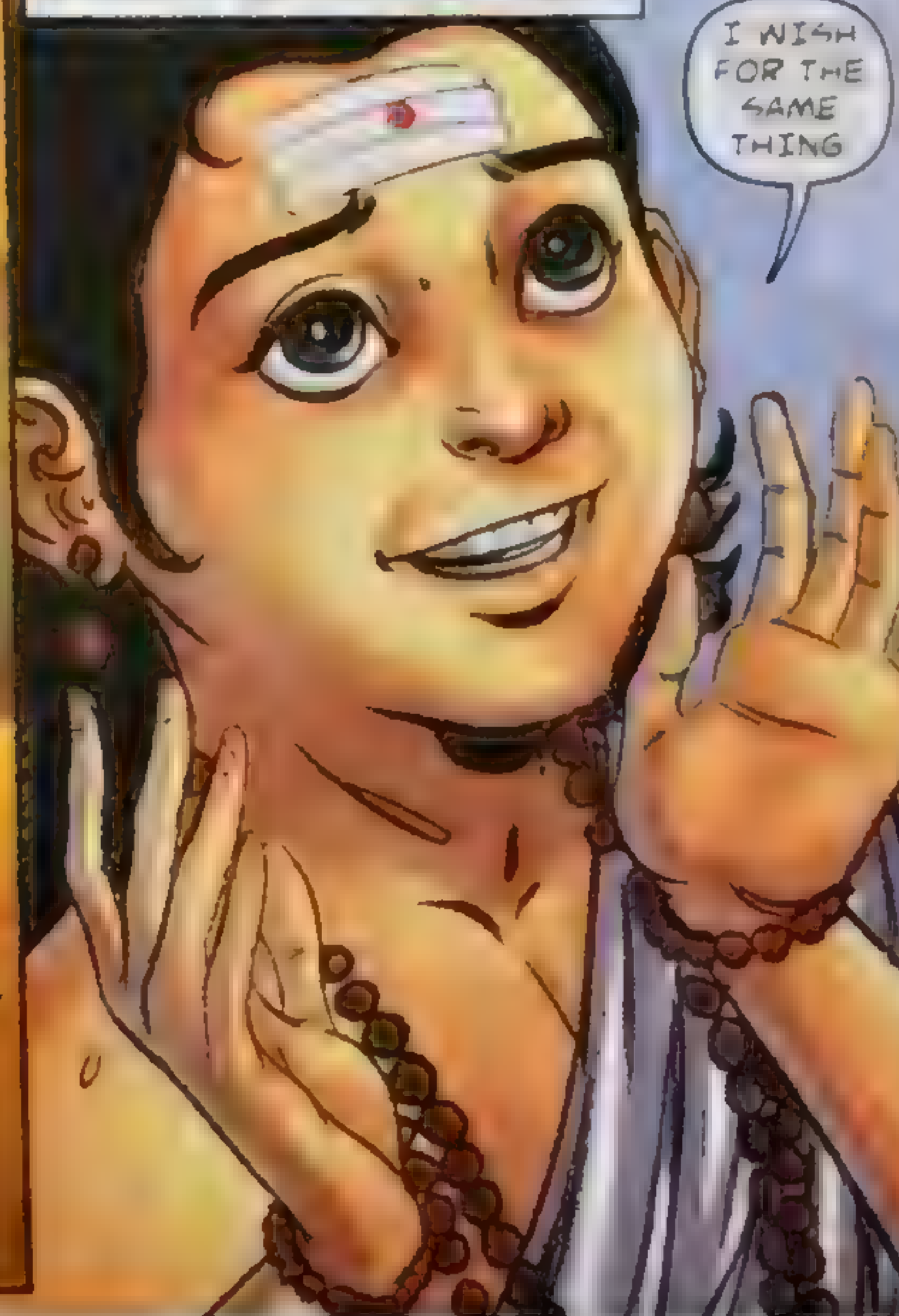
NANDI SAT ON THE BANKS OF RIVER BHUVANA AND MEDITATED ON SHIVA.



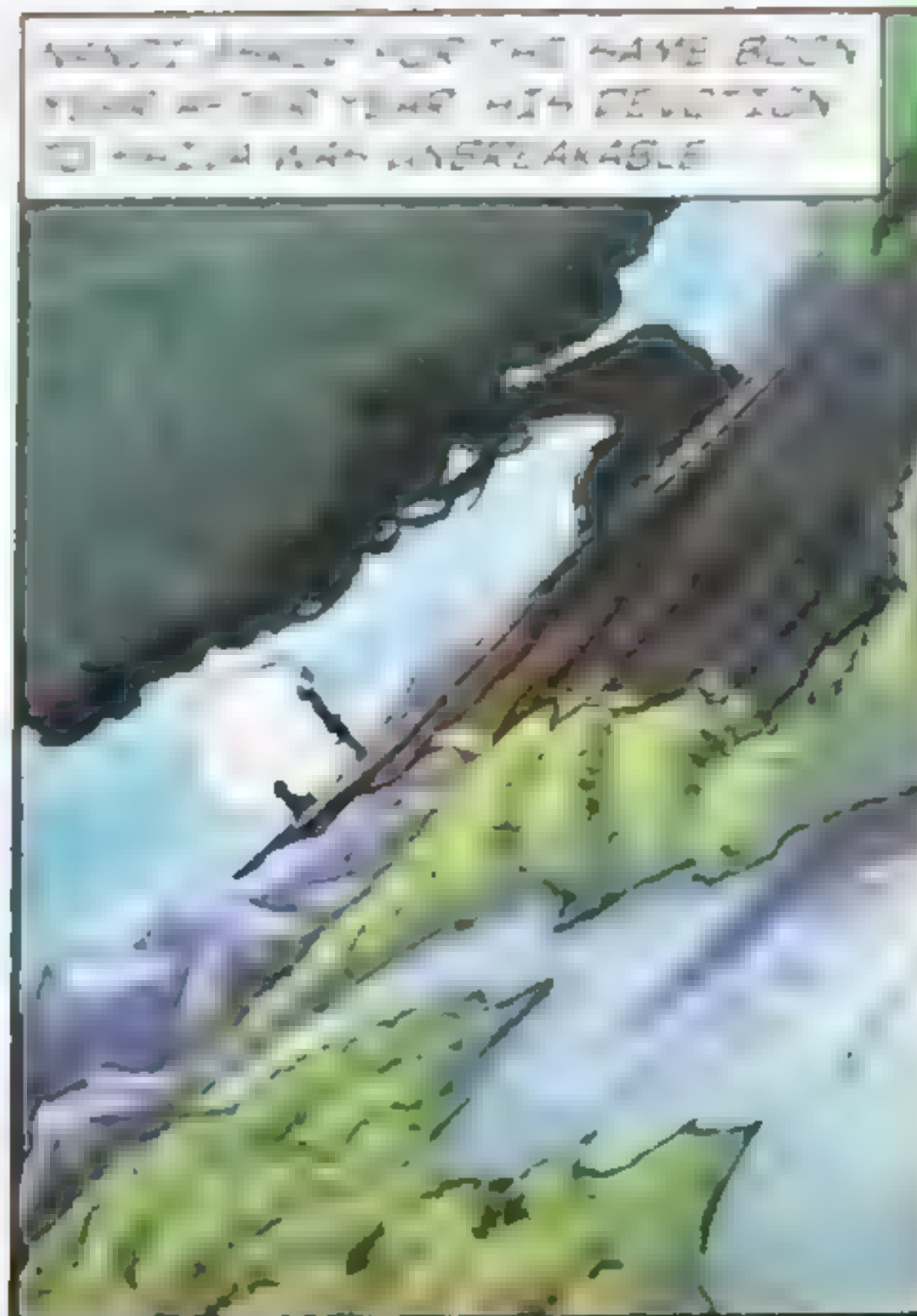
SOON -



AT THE END OF THE YEAR, SHIVA APPEARED BEFORE NANDI AGAIN







NANDI FAST FOR THE SAME BOON YEAR AFTER YEAR HIS DEVOTION TO SHIVA WAS UNBREAKABLE



AFTER A FEW YEARS -

OPEN YOUR EYES NANDI. YOU DO NOT NEED TO DO THIS ANY MORE.

YOU ARE ALREADY IMMORTAL ASK FOR ANYTHING

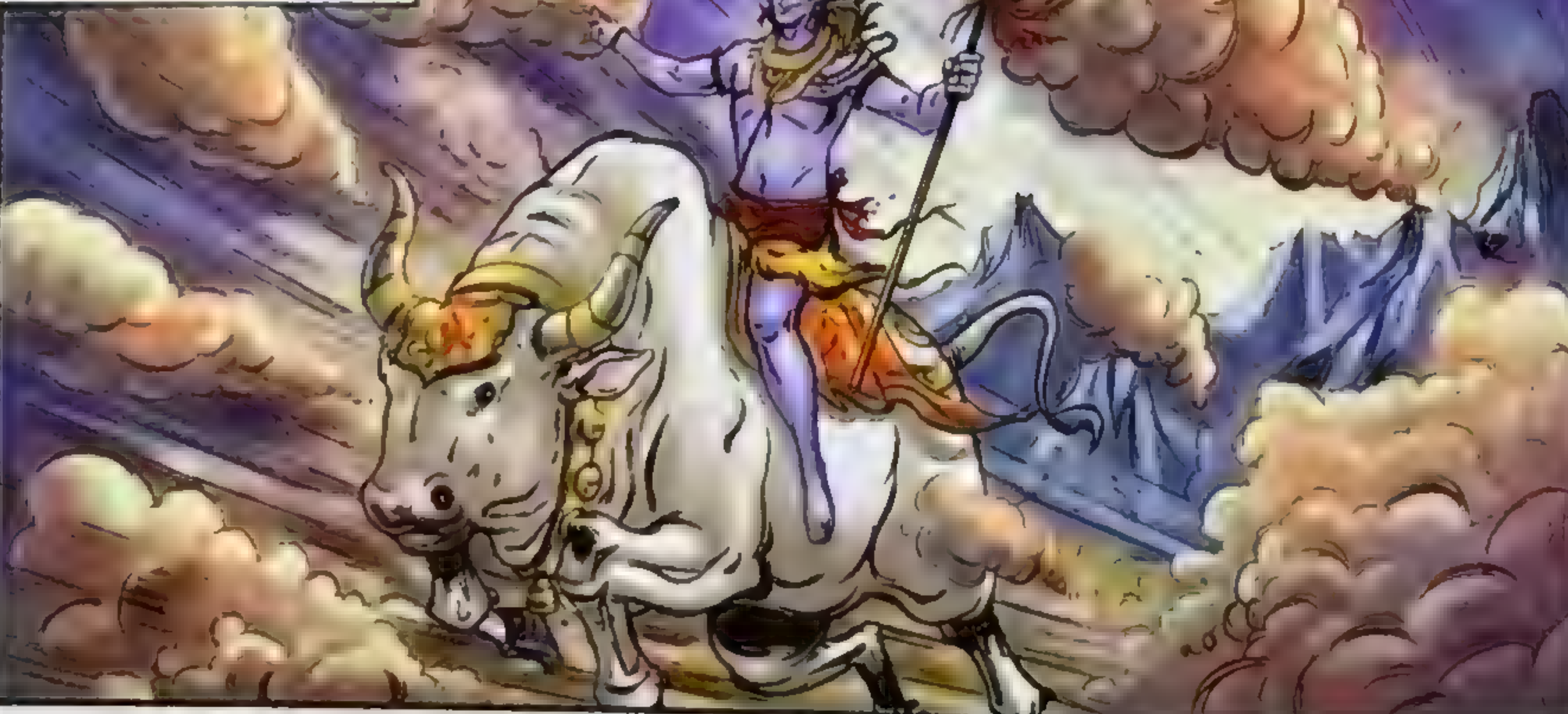
ALL I WISH IS TO BE AT YOUR SIDE FOR EVER.



SO BE IT. YOU WILL BE MY VEHICLE AND MY CLOSEST AIDE

SHIVA BLESSED NANDI, TRANSFORMING THE BOY INTO A DIVINE BULL.

HE TOOK NANDI TO HIS HOME ON MOUNT KAILASH.



SHIVA TRAVELLED ON NANDI WHEREVER HE WENT

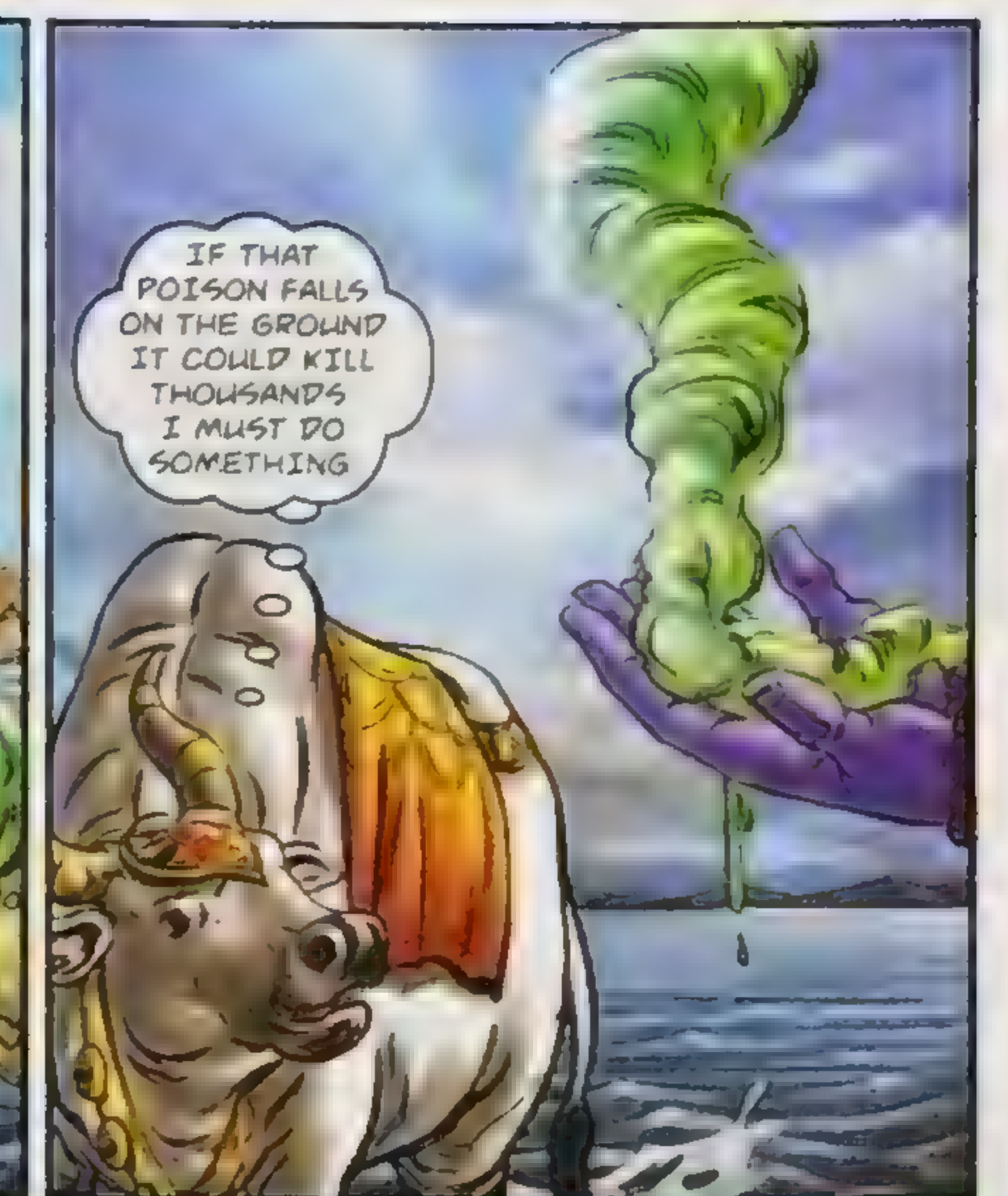


ONCE, WHEN THE GODS AND THE ASURAS CHURNED THE OCEAN TO OBTAIN THE LIFE-GIVING AMRITA...

...A DEADLY POISON SPOWED OUT, THREATENING TO ENGULF THE WORLD











NANDI'S DEVOTION TO SHIVA WAS PRAISED THROUGH THE THREE WORLDS



ONE DAY, RAVANA, THE TEN-HEADED KING OF LANKA, CAME KNOCKING AT THE GATES OF SHIVA'S ABOVE NANDI WAS GUARDING IT AS USUAL







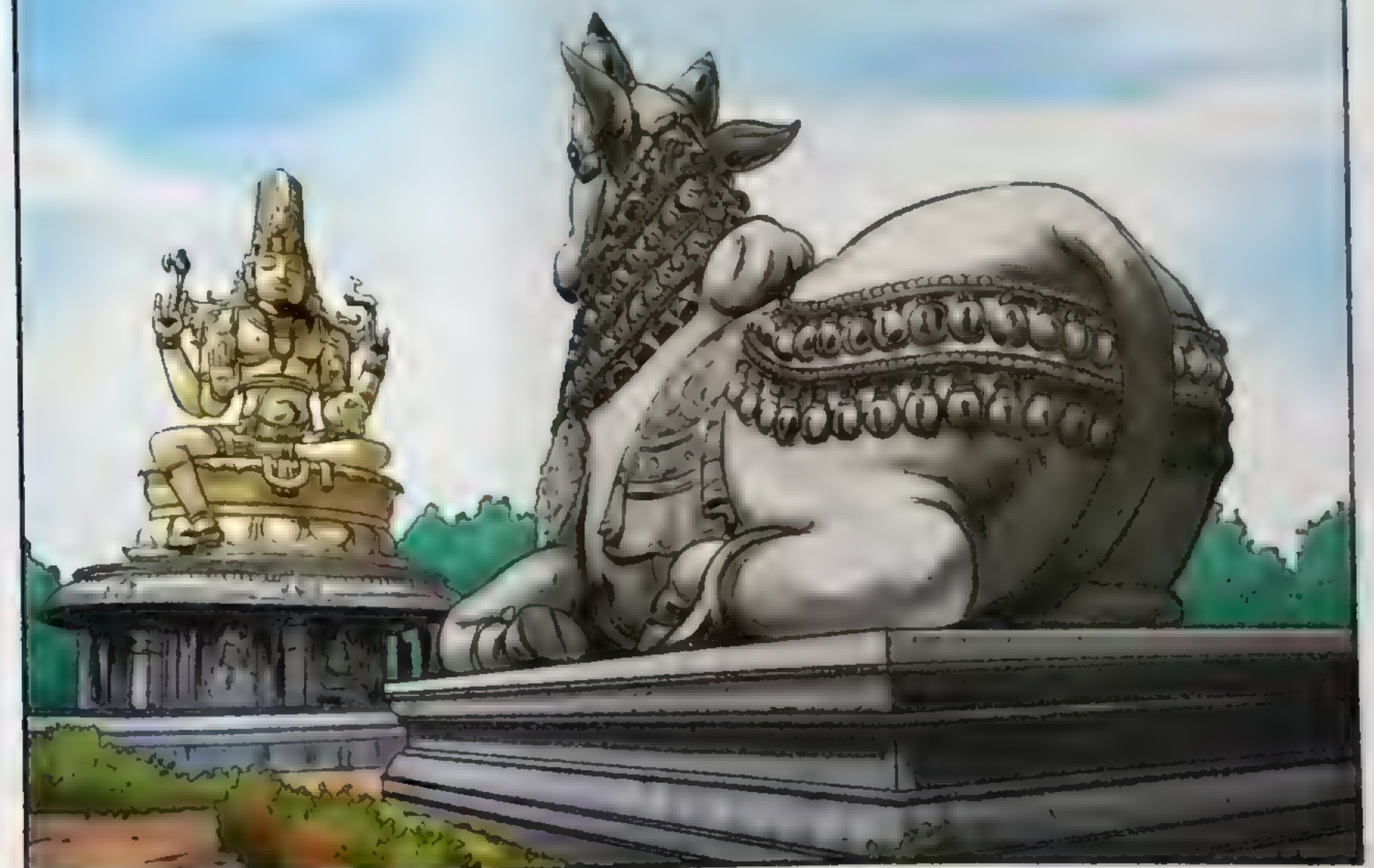
RAVANA WAS SHOCKED AND RETURNED TO LANKA



NANDI'S CURSE CAME TO PASS WHEN AN ARMY OF MONKEYS LED BY THE PRINCE OF AYODHYA, RAMA DEFEATED RAVANA AND HIS MIGHTY ARMY



EVERY SHIVA TEMPLE HAS A STATUE OF NANDI DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF THE MAIN SANCTUM SANCTORUM\*. NANDI SITS THERE GUARDING HIS LORD THROUGH ETERNITY



\*THE SACRED SPACE IN A PLACE OF WORSHIP WHERE THE IDOL, OR SYMBOL, OF THE DEITY IS PLACED



# Uchhaisravas

The pure white, seven-headed horse, Uchhaisravas, was among the gifts that emerged when the devas and asuras churned the Ocean of Milk. This beautiful horse was immediately taken by Indra, and became one of his vahanas or carriers.

Once King Revanta, Surya's son, wanted to visit Vishnu and Lakshmi. Being a friend of Indra's, he borrowed Uchhaisravas to travel to Vaikuntha. Lakshmi was so excited to see her brother Uchhaisravas (both were born from the Ocean of Milk) that she was distracted and did not hear something Vishnu said. Annoyed, Vishnu cursed Lakshmi to be born as a mare. Lakshmi tearfully apologised and Vishnu softened. He said that she would return to Vaikuntha after giving birth to a son as glorious as Vishnu himself.

As a mare on earth, Lakshmi prayed to Shiva for a thousand years to find out who the father of this glorious son would be. Finally, Shiva and Parvati appeared, and assured her that they would find a solution. Shiva then sent Vishnu down to earth as a horse to be with Lakshmi. A baby boy was born after which Lakshmi and Vishnu returned to Vaikuntha. The boy was adopted by King Satajit and named Ekavira. He was also called Hehaya, meaning 'born from a horse', and became one of the founders of the Hehaya dynasty.

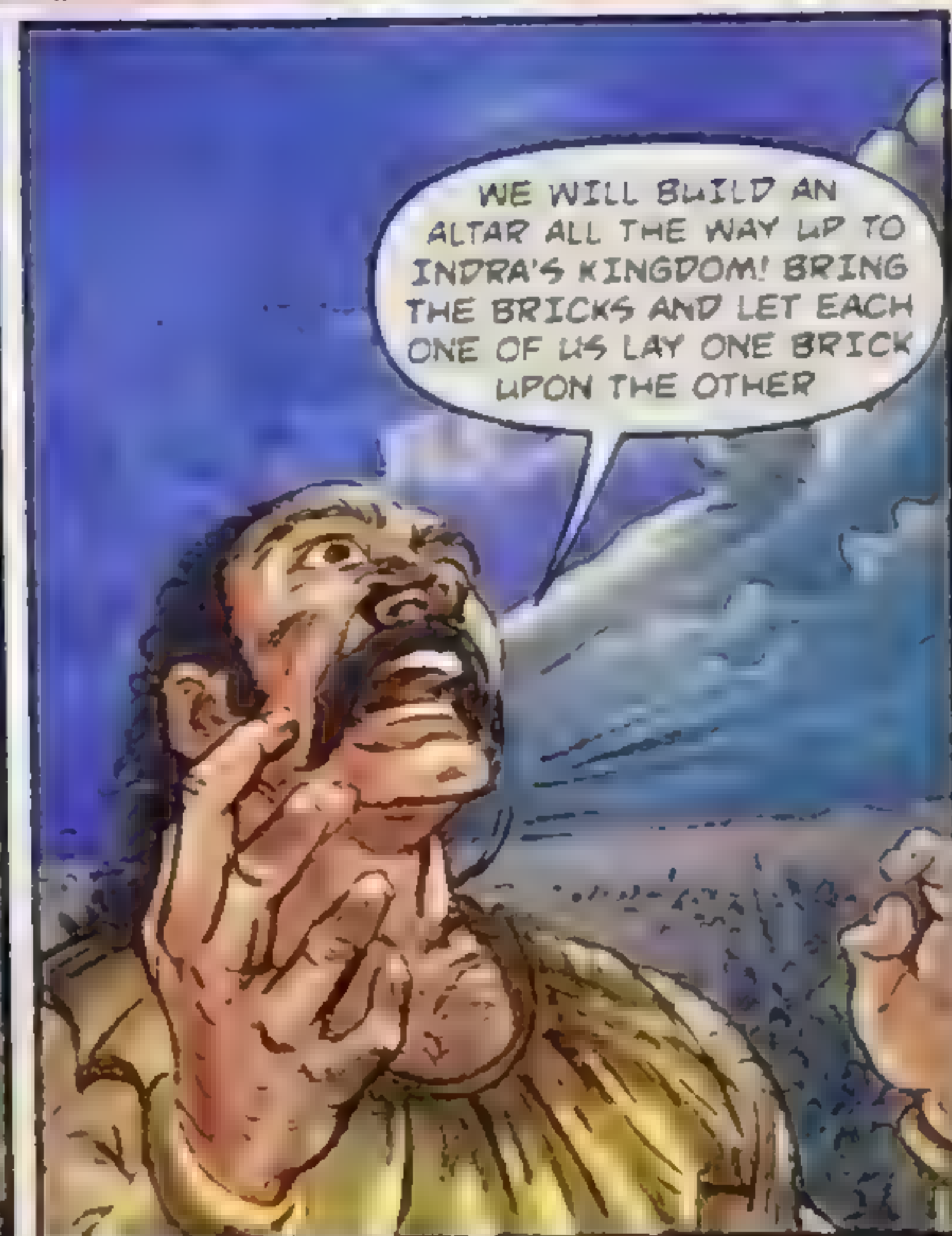
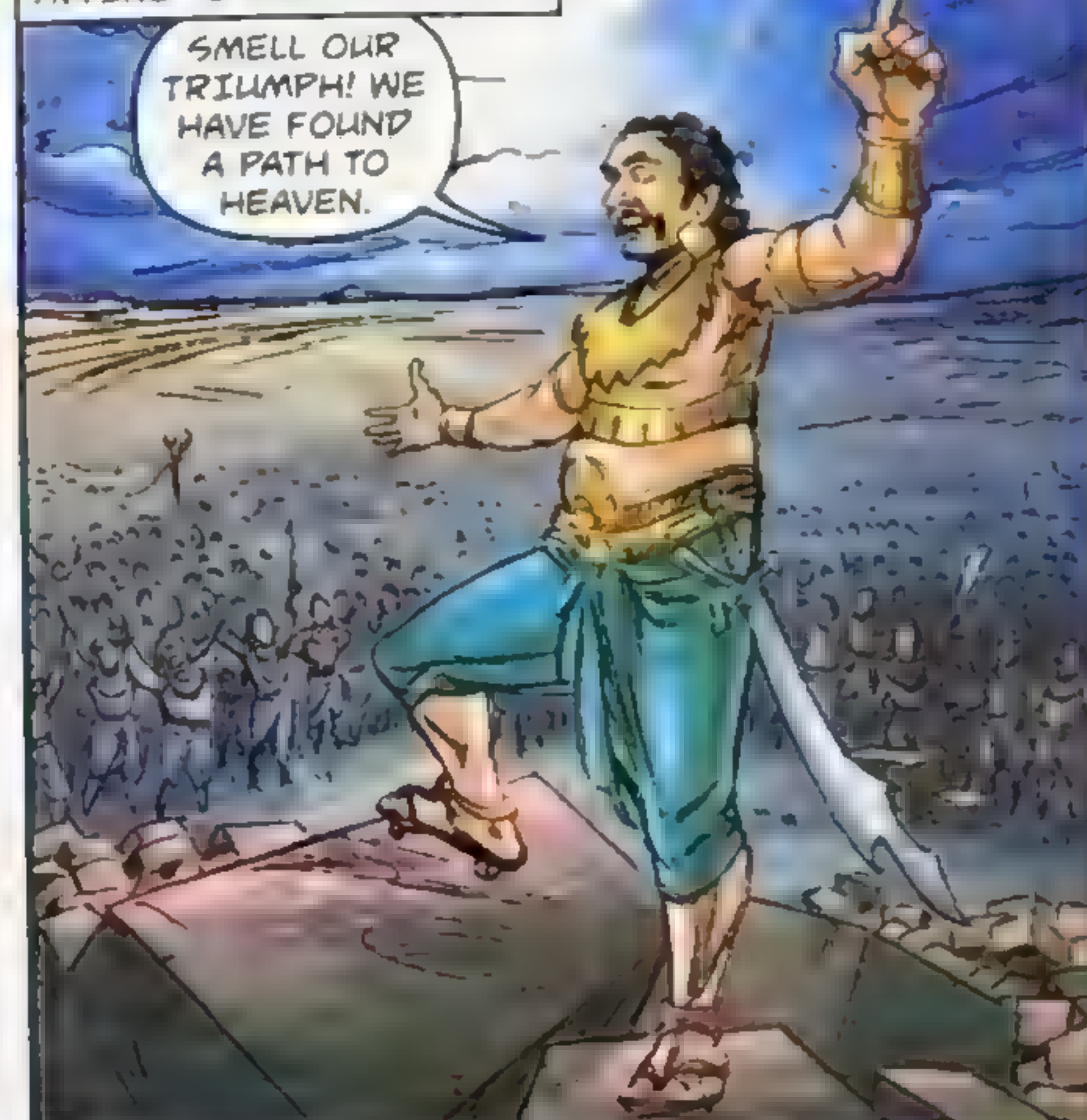


## SHYAMA AND SABALA

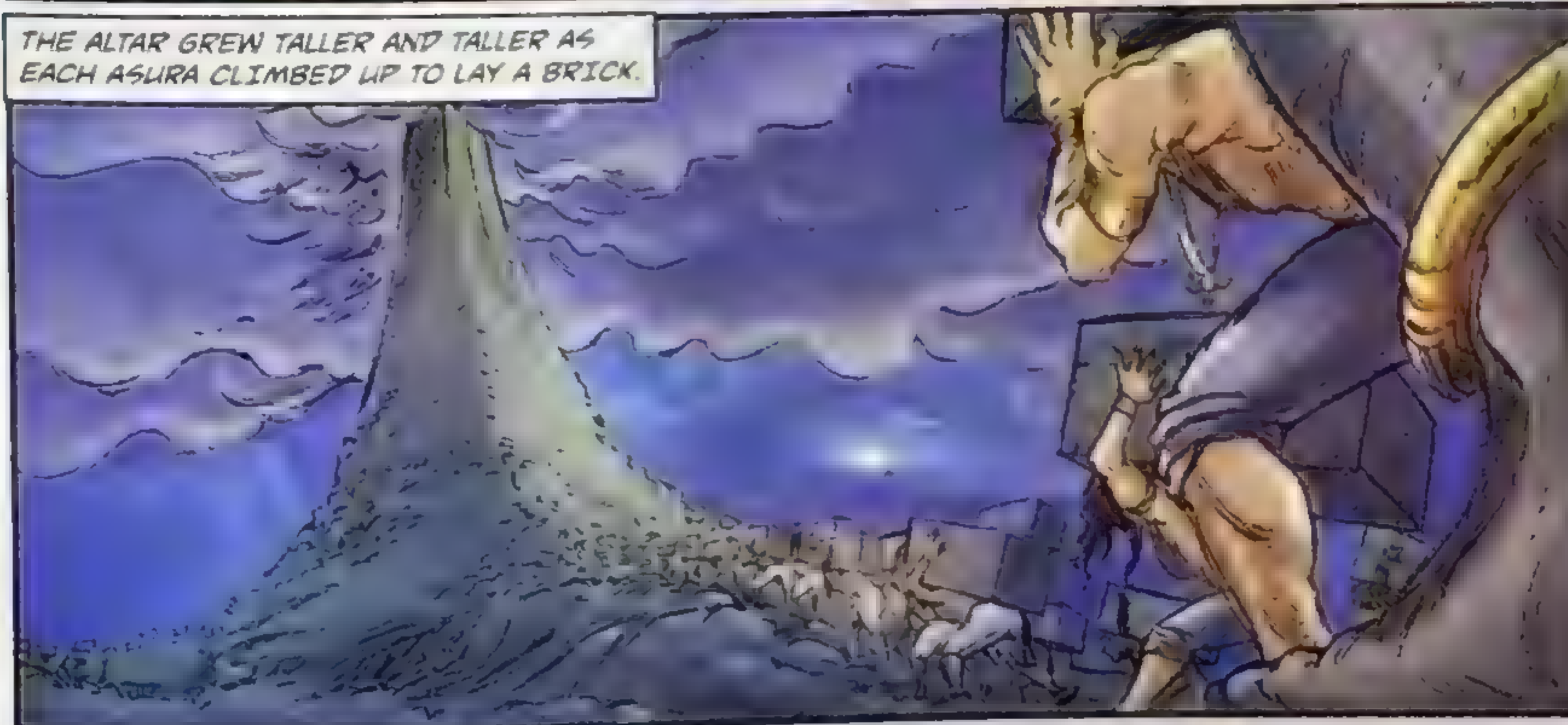
ALL THE GODS WERE IN INDRA'S COURT DISCUSSING THE STATE OF THE WORLD, WHEN SUDDENLY -



A GROUP OF ASURAS CALLED THE KALAKANJAS WERE TRYING TO GET TO HEAVEN.



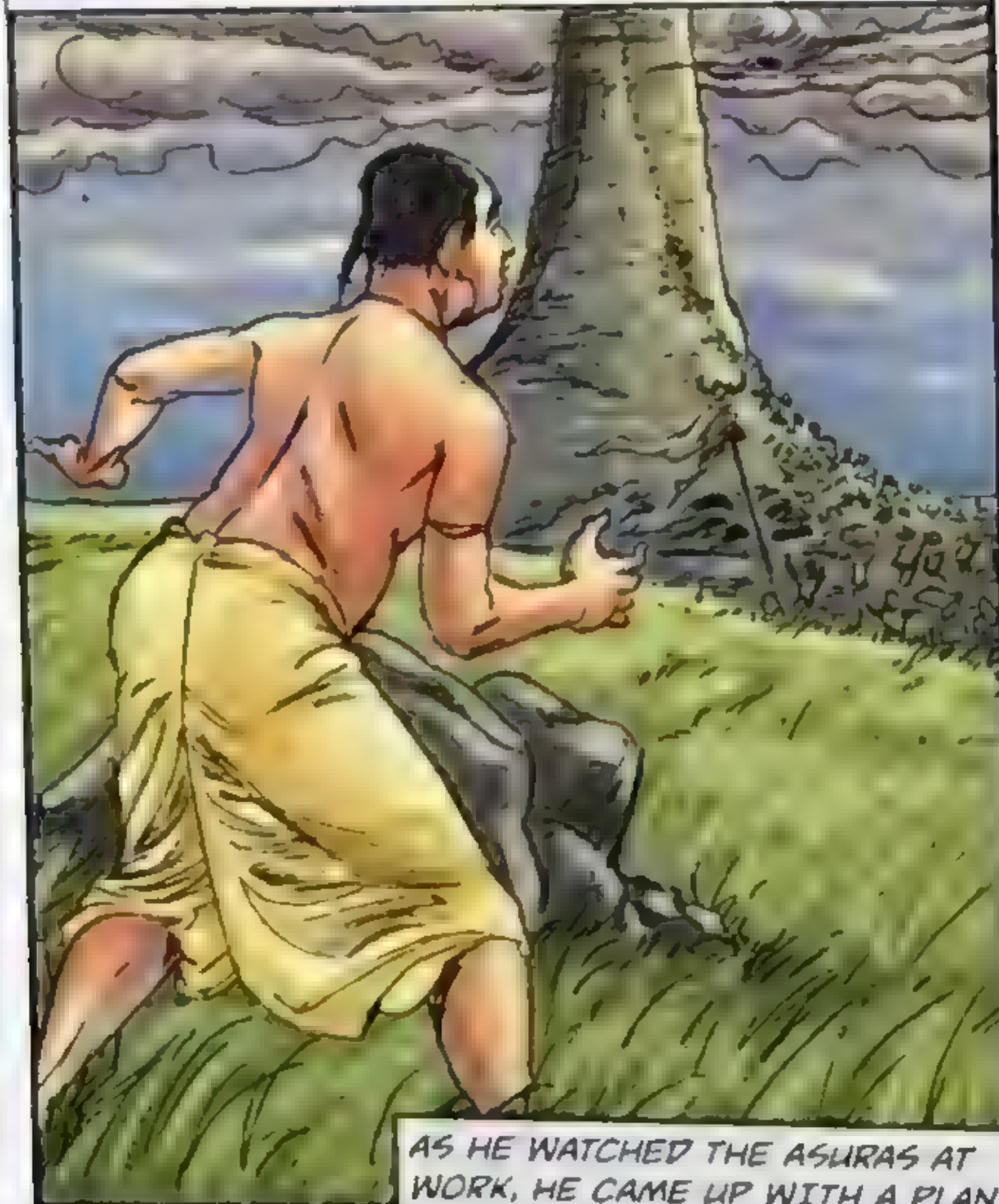
THE ALTAR GREW TALLER AND TALLER AS EACH ASURA CLIMBED UP TO LAY A BRICK.



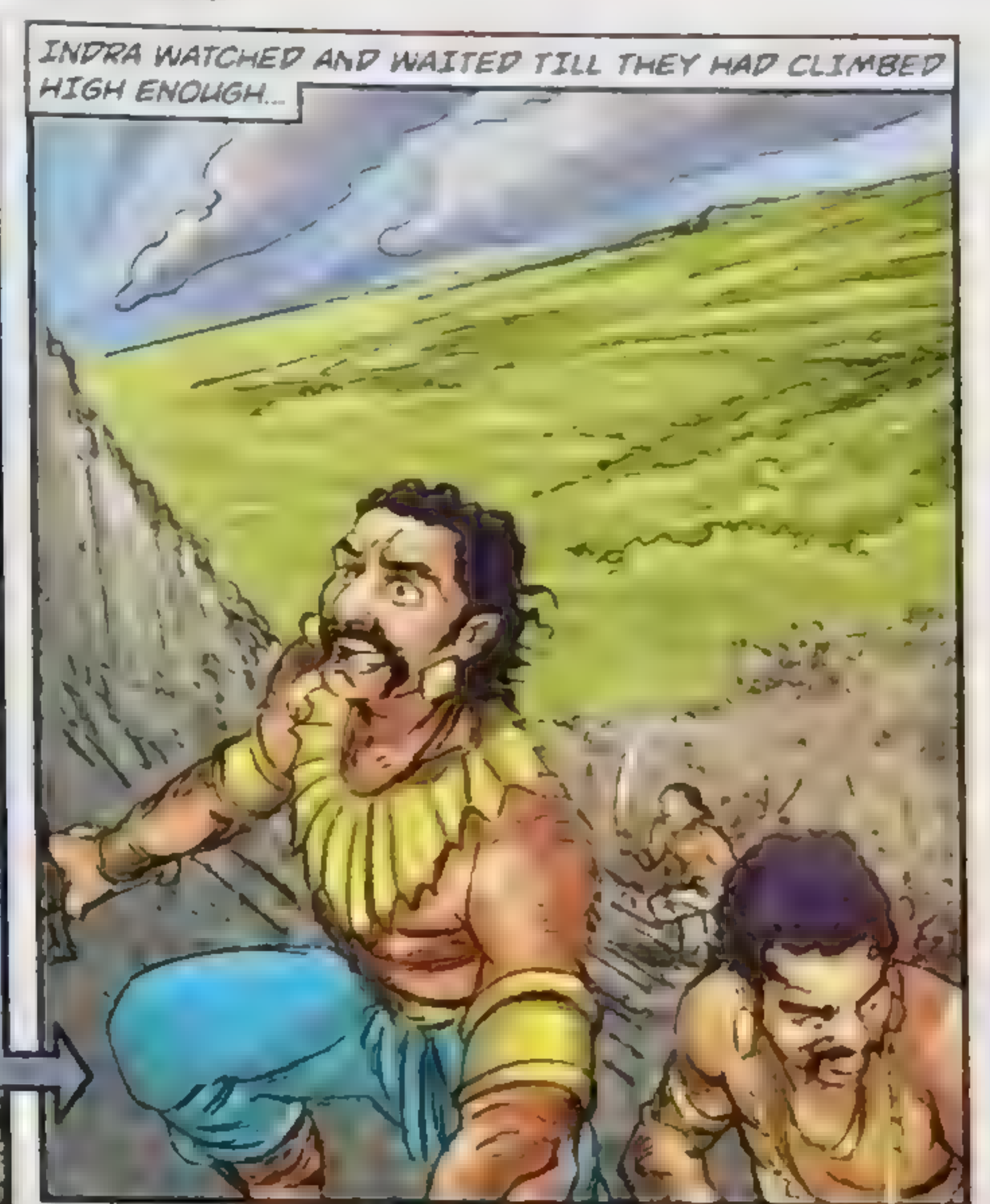
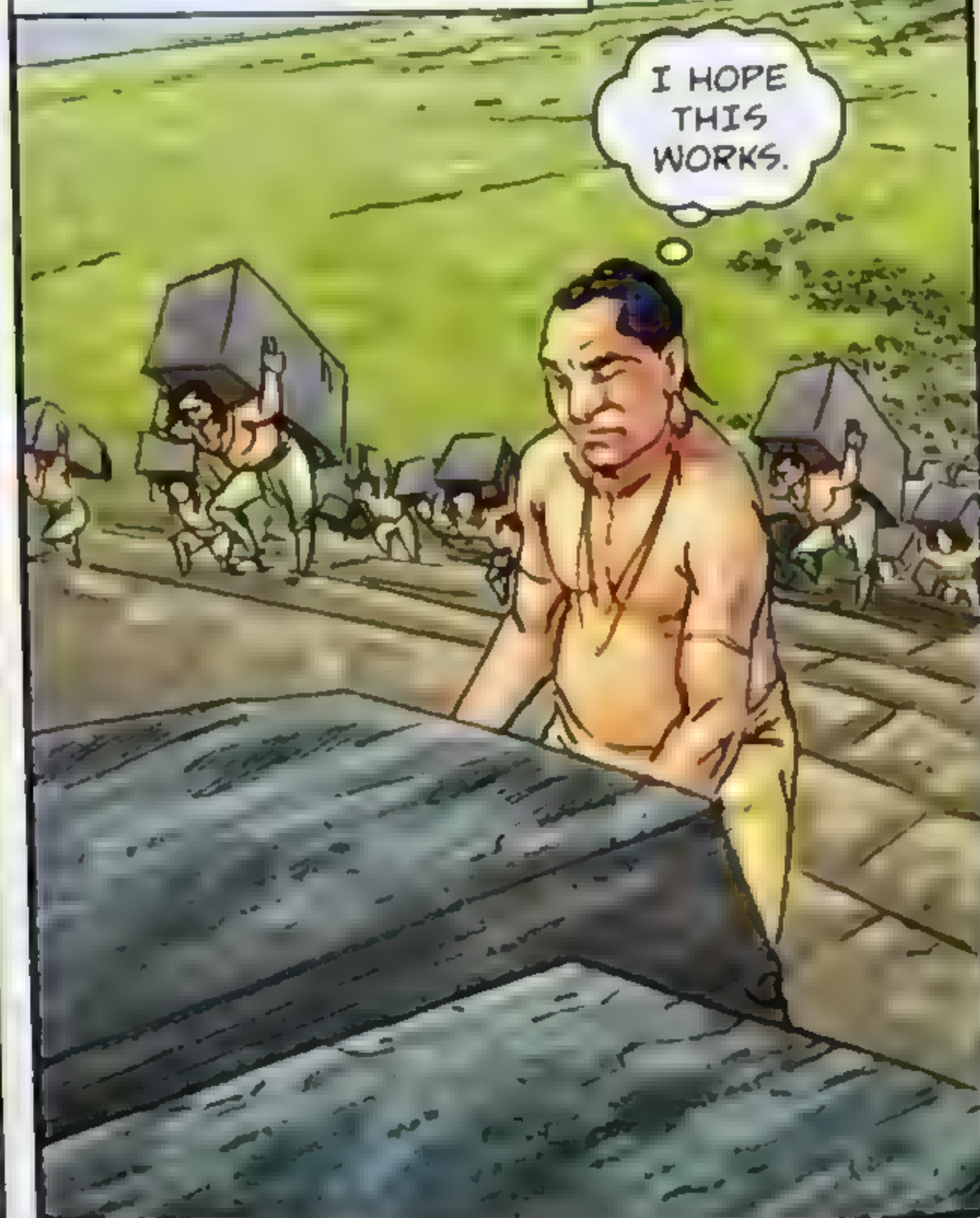




INDRA DISGUISED HIMSELF AND WENT DOWN TO SEE.



HE PICKED UP A BRICK AND PLACED IT ON THE ALTAR.



THE STRUCTURE LOST ITS BALANCE AND CAME TUMBLING DOWN



AND THEN TOOK HIS BRICK OUT.





AS THEY FELL TOWARDS THE GROUND THE ASURAS STARTED TURNING INTO SPIDERS, AND LANDED SAFELY.



THE TWO ASURAS, WHO WERE ALMOST AT THE TOP, TURNED INTO DOGS



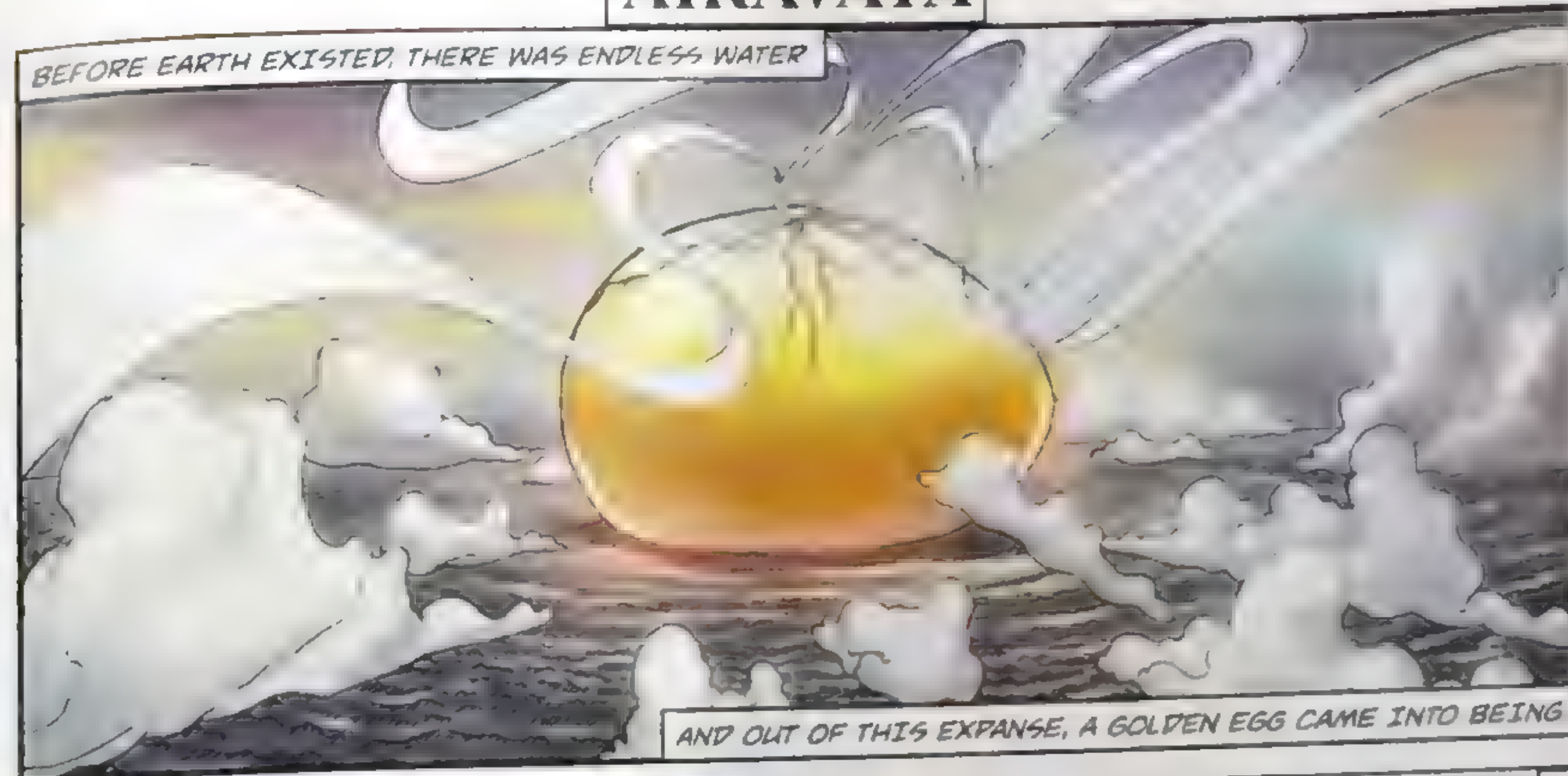
THEY CAME TO BE KNOWN AS SHYAMA AND SABALA, REPRESENTING DUSK AND DAWN



YOU WILL GUARD THE GATES OF YAMA FOR ALL ETERNITY.

AND SO, IT IS SAID, THEY DO TO THIS DAY.

BEFORE EARTH EXISTED, THERE WAS ENDLESS WATER



AND OUT OF THIS EXPANSE, A GOLDEN EGG CAME INTO BEING

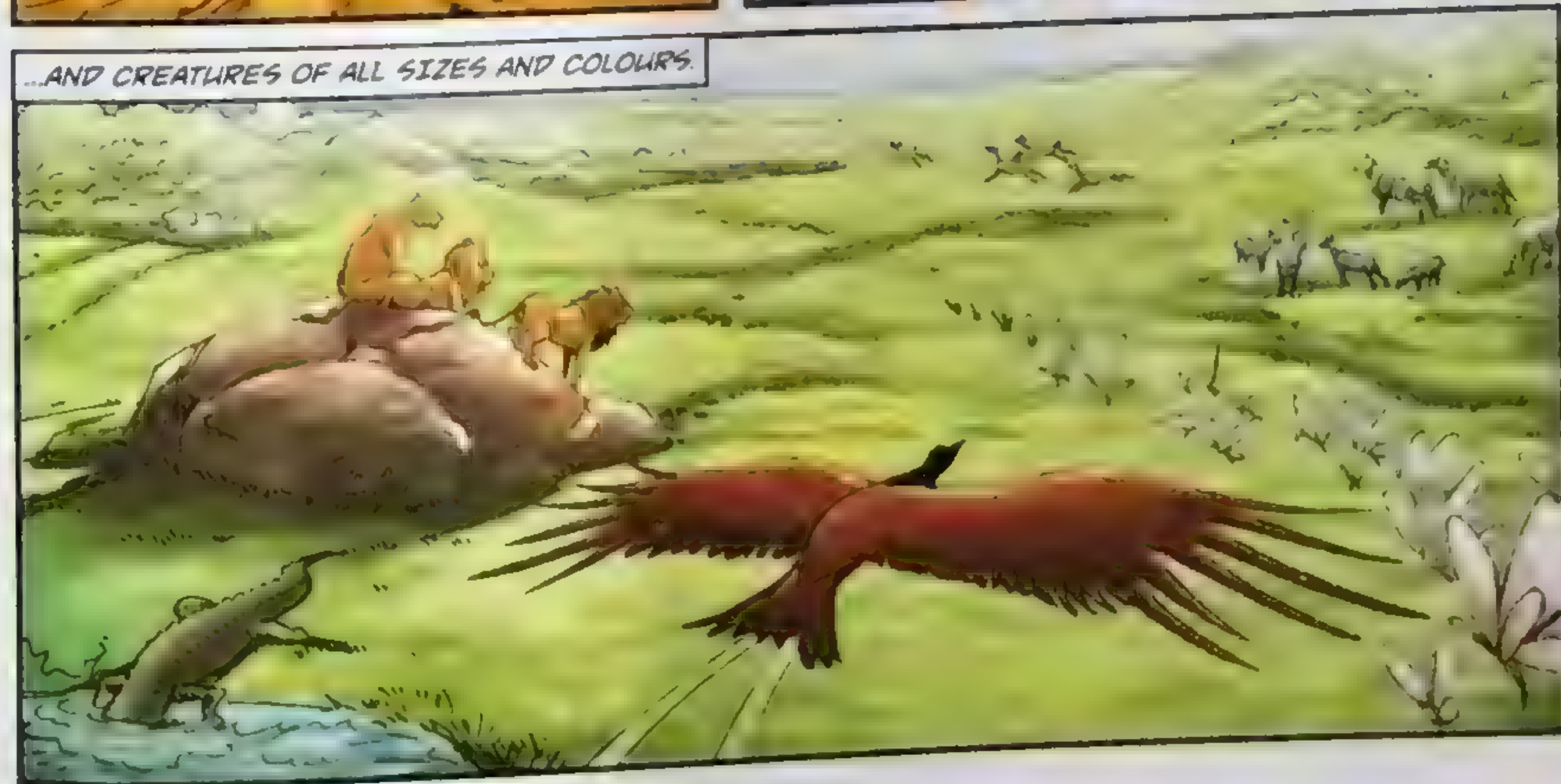
THE EGG SPLIT AND BRAHMA, THE CREATOR OF THE UNIVERSE, EMERGED FROM IT.



BRAHMA CREATED HEAVEN AND THE EARTH, WEATHER AND TIME



...AND CREATURES OF ALL SIZES AND COLOURS.





AMONG THEM, WERE SIXTEEN MAJESTIC WINGED ELEPHANTS, EIGHT FEMALE AND EIGHT MALE. ONE OF THEM WAS THE MIGHTY AIRAVATA, WHOM BRAHMA DECLARED LEADER OF ALL ELEPHANTS



THE ELEPHANTS WERE SENT IN PAIRS TO EIGHT GODS TOGETHER, THEY WATCHED OVER THE EIGHT DIRECTIONS

BRAHMA DECREED THAT AIRAVATA AND ABHRAHMA WOULD GUARD THE EAST WITH INDRA. THE SOUTH-EAST WOULD BE GUARDED BY PUNDARIKA AND KAPILA WITH AGNI, AND THE SOUTH BY VAMANA AND PINGALA WITH YAMA



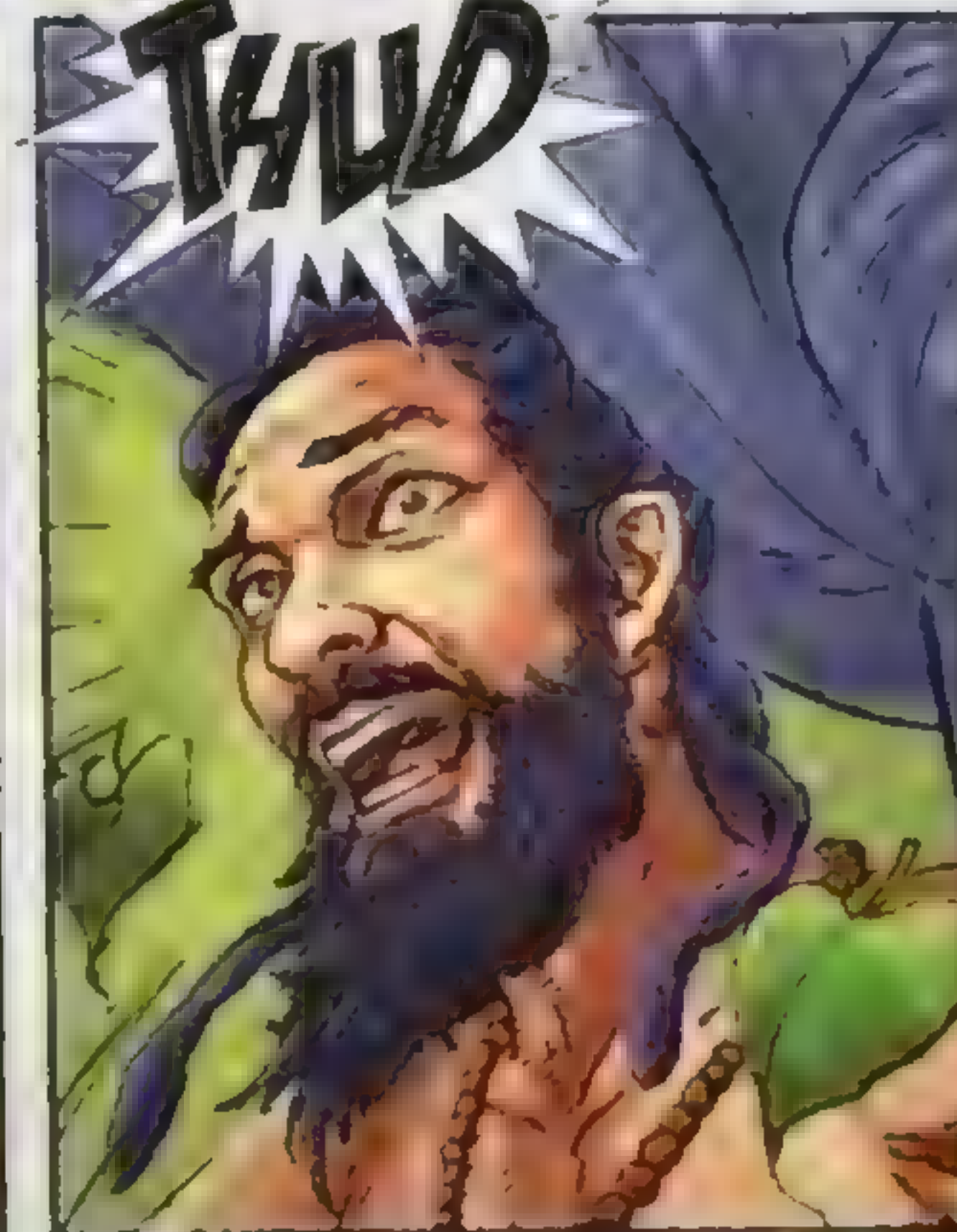
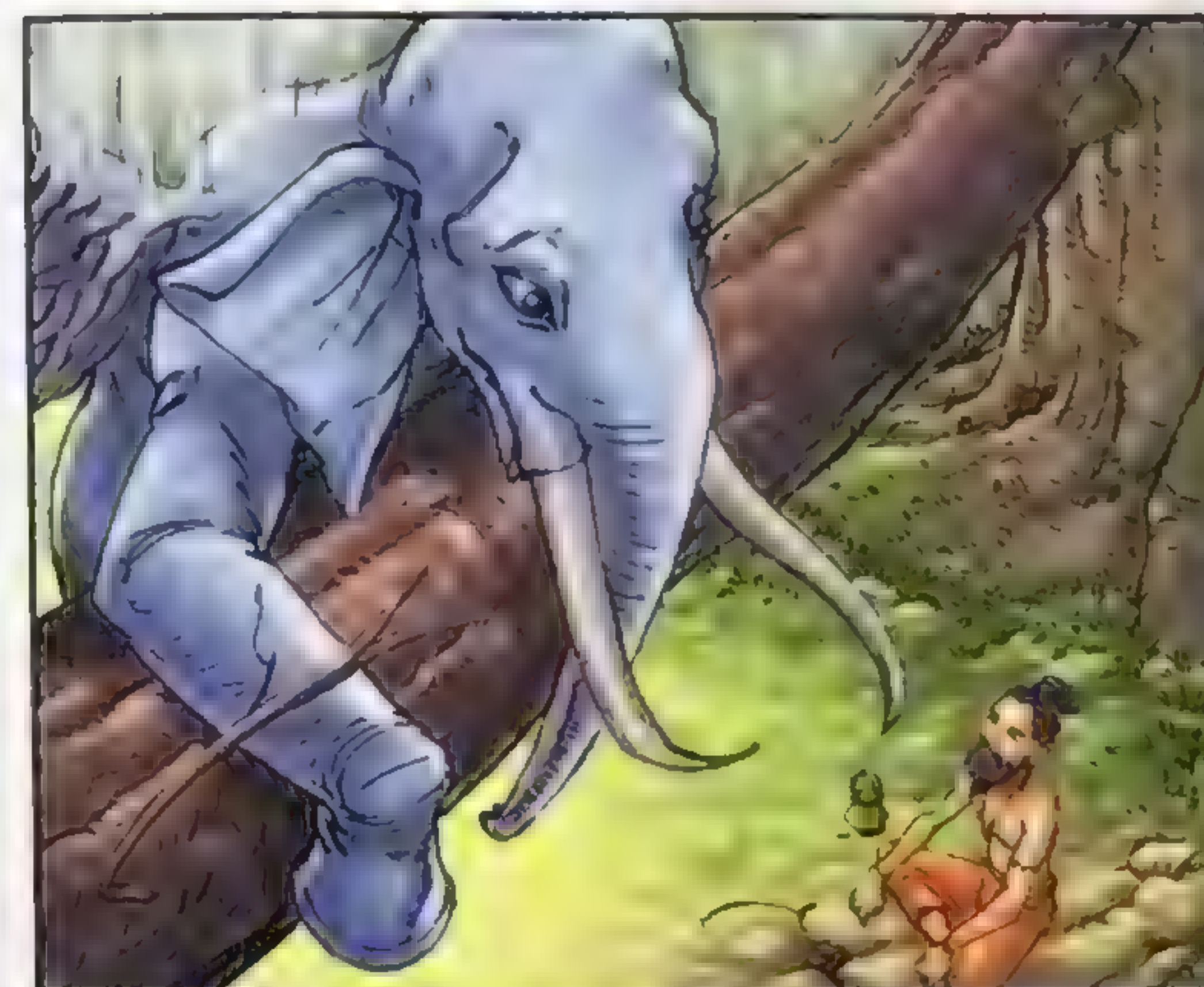
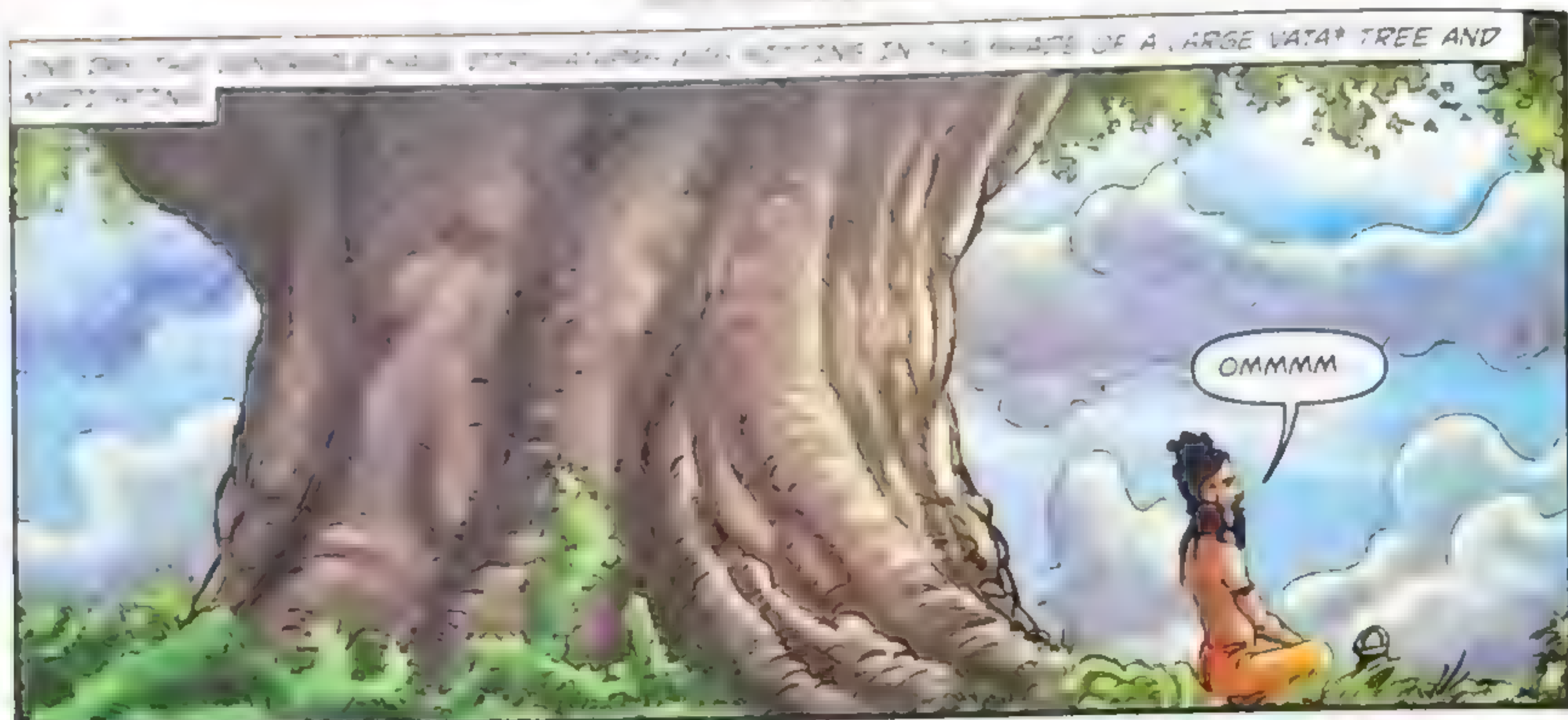
THE SOUTH-WEST HAD KUMUDA AND ANUPAMA WITH SURYA, THE WEST HAD ANJANA AND ANJANAA WITH VARUNA, AND THE NORTH-WEST HAD PUSHPADANTA AND SHUBHADANTI WITH VAYU

THE NORTH HAD SARVABHALLMA AND TAMRAKARNA WITH KUBERA, AND THE NORTH-EAST HAD SUPRATIKHA AND ANJANAVATI WITH SOMA

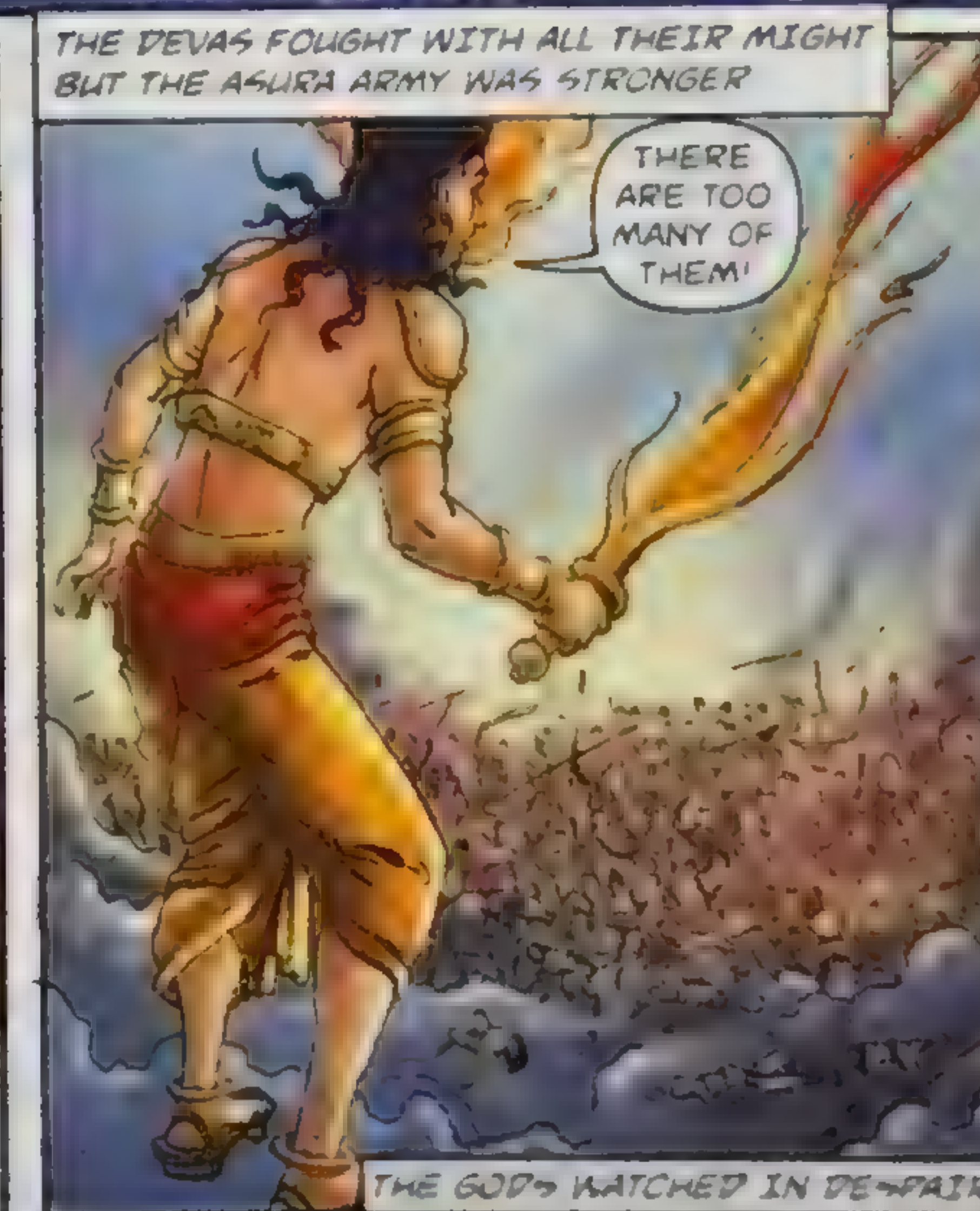
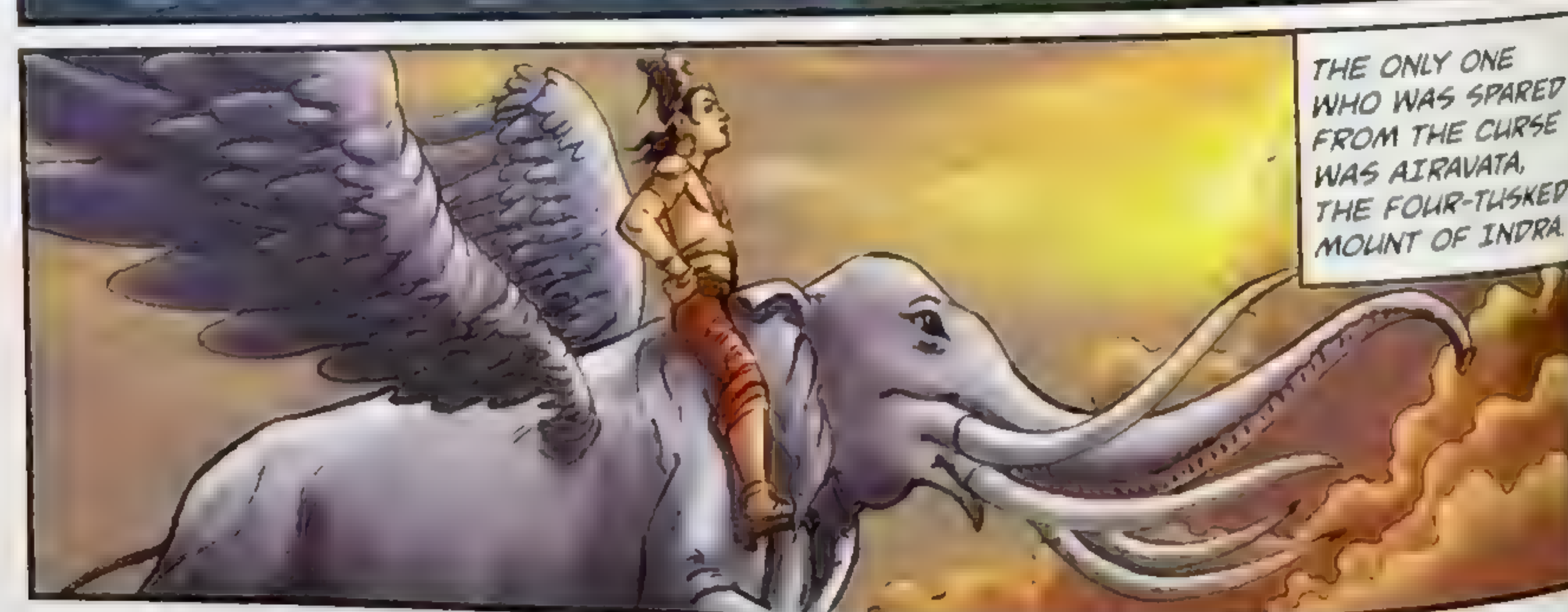
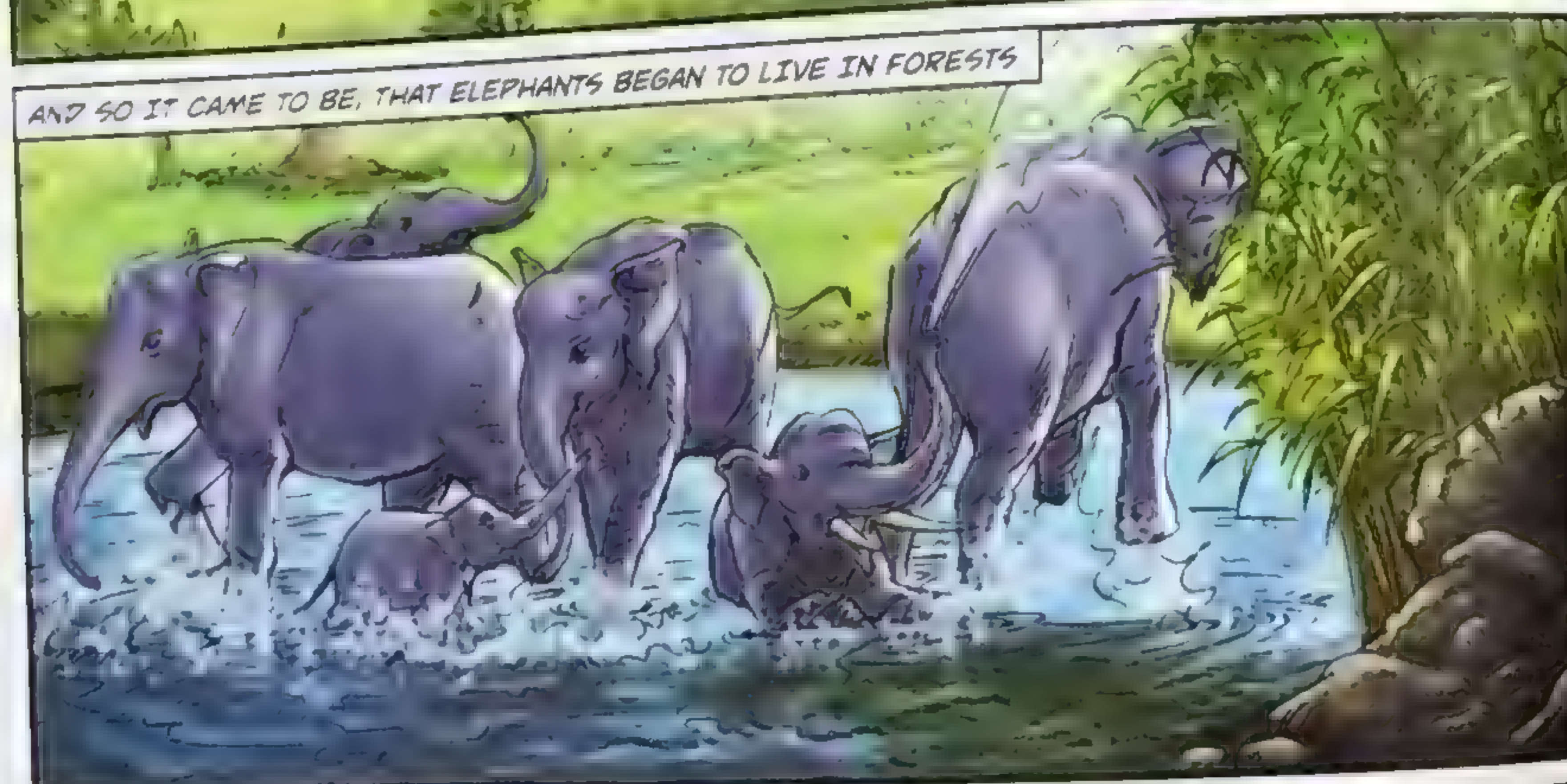


THEY HELPED FORM THE RAIN CLOUDS. THEY ROAMED THE SKIES AND WERE A SYMBOL OF PROSPERITY



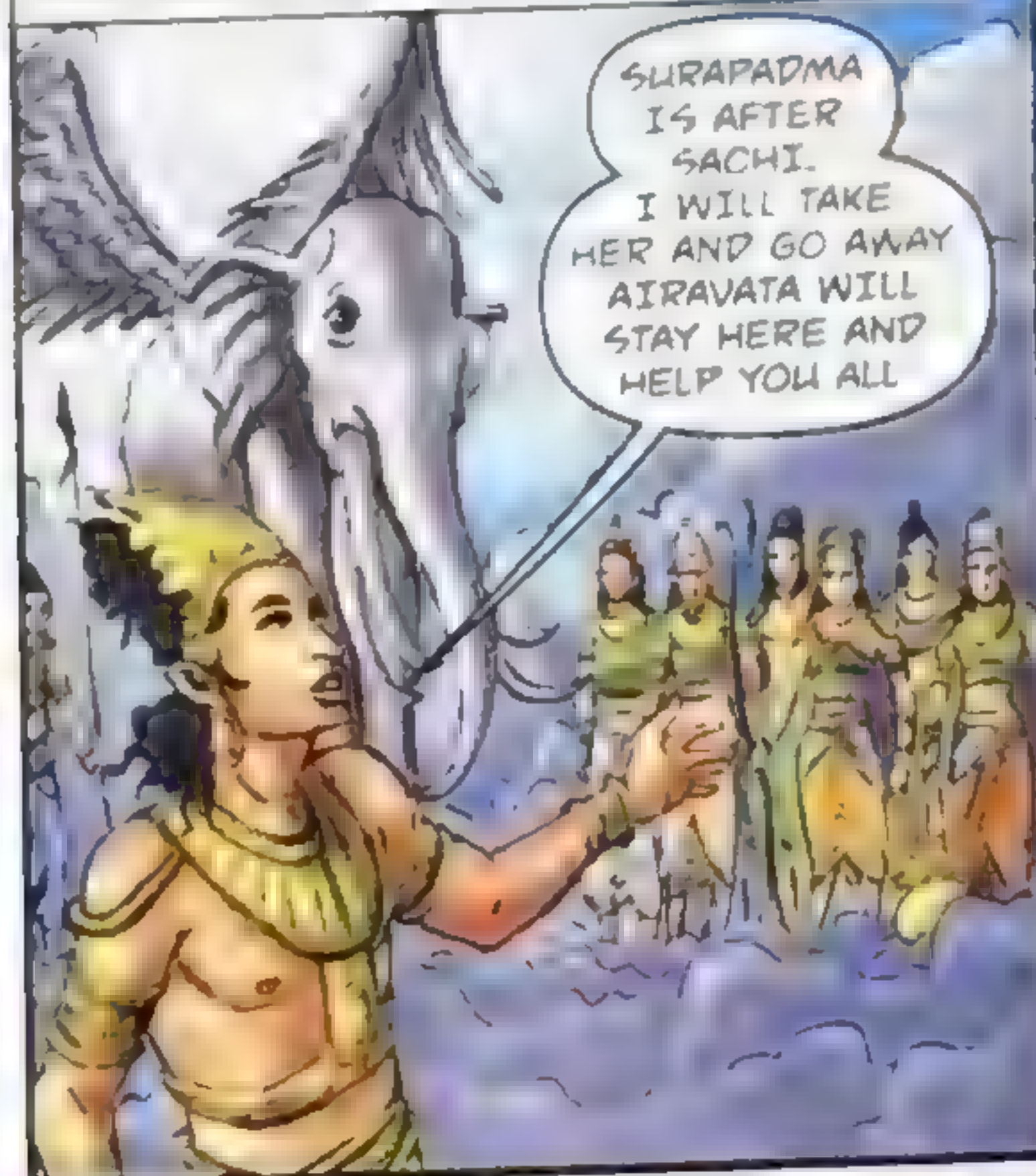








AS THE BATTLE RAGED ON, INDRA REALISED THAT SACHI HIS WIFE, WAS THE TARGET.



SURAPADMA IS AFTER SACHI. I WILL TAKE HER AND GO AWAY. AIRAVATA WILL STAY HERE AND HELP YOU ALL.

WITHOUT THEIR KING, THE GODS WERE CONFUSED. THEY LOOKED TO THEIR GURU, BRIHASPATI, FOR ADVICE.



THERE IS NO ONE TO LEAD US. WHAT ARE OUR ORDERS?

JAYANTA, YOU WILL LEAD THE ARMY NOW.



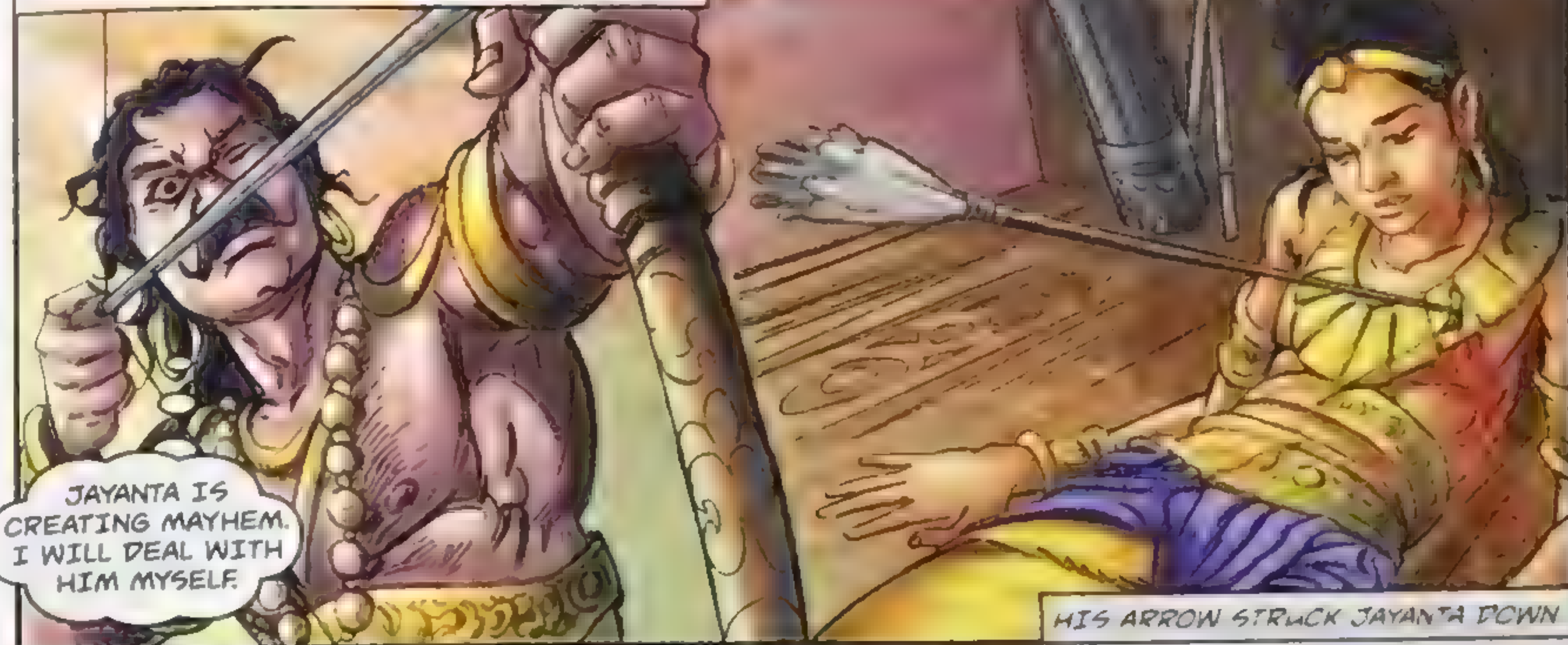
I WON'T LET YOU DOWN.

JAYANTA WAS INDRA'S SON.

ON THE NEXT DAY OF BATTLE, JAYANTA WAS UNSTOPPABLE.



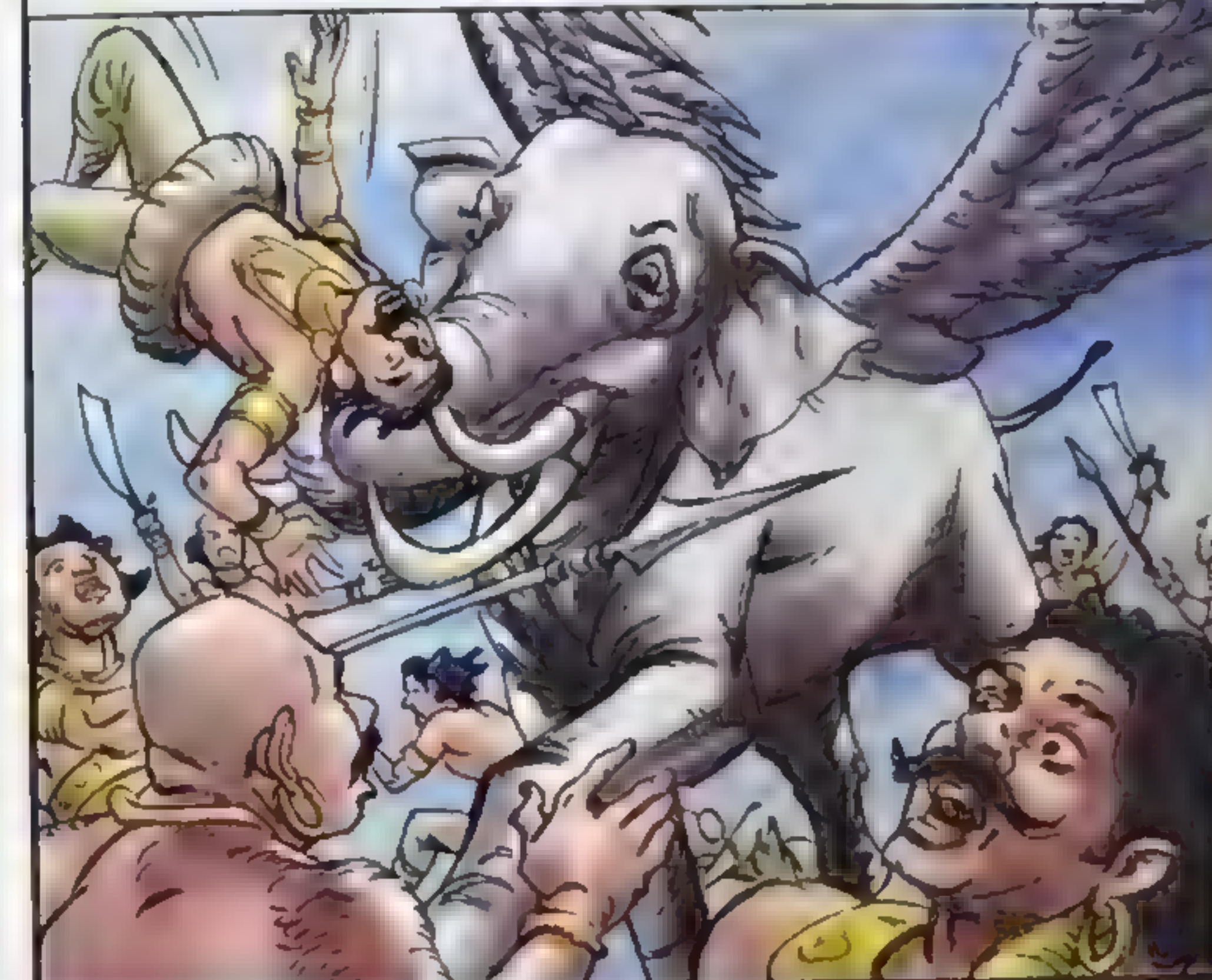
HIS HEROICS DREW SURAPADMA'S ATTENTION



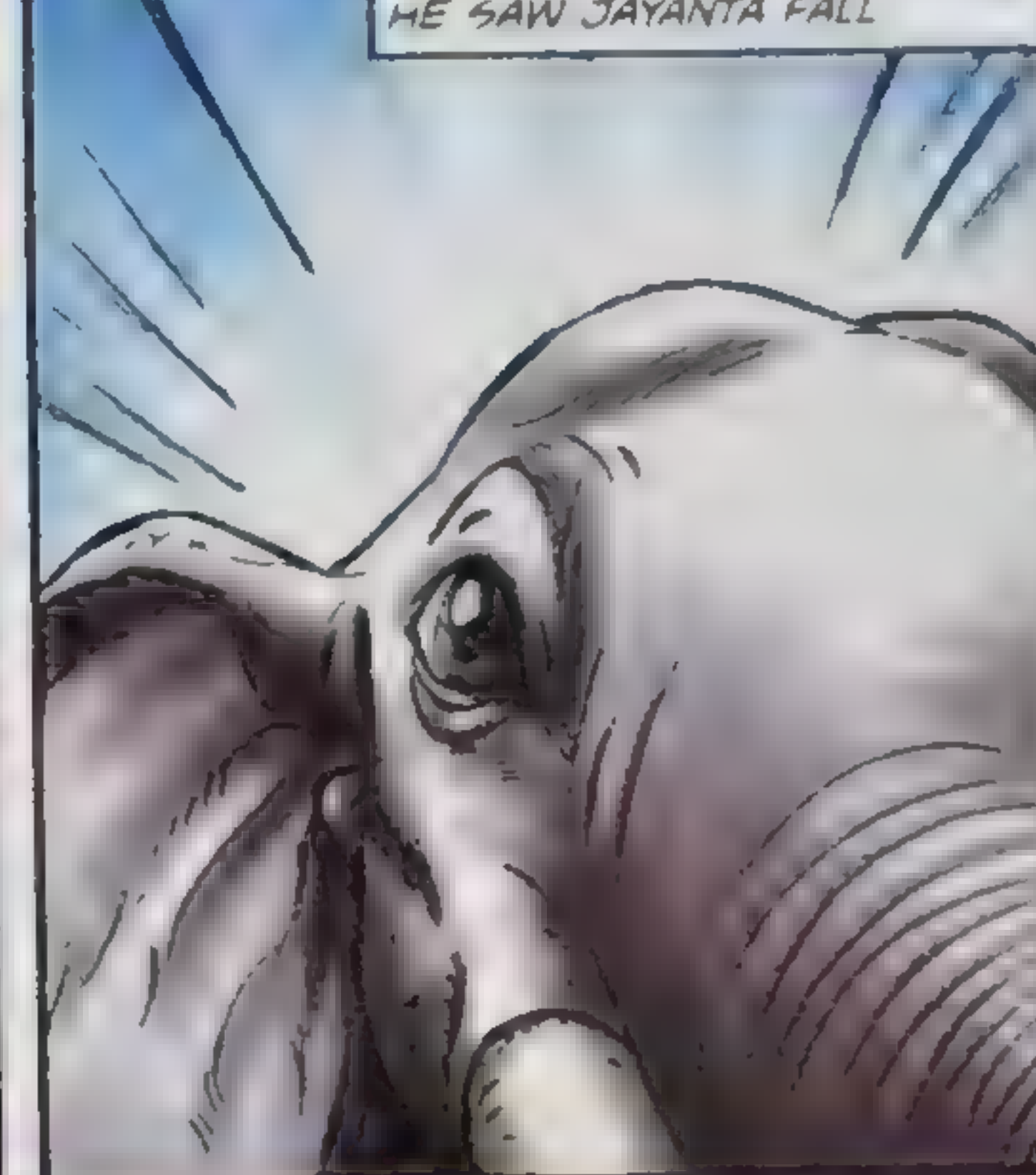
JAYANTA IS CREATING MAYHEM. I WILL DEAL WITH HIM MYSELF.

HIS ARROW STRUCK JAYANTA DOWN

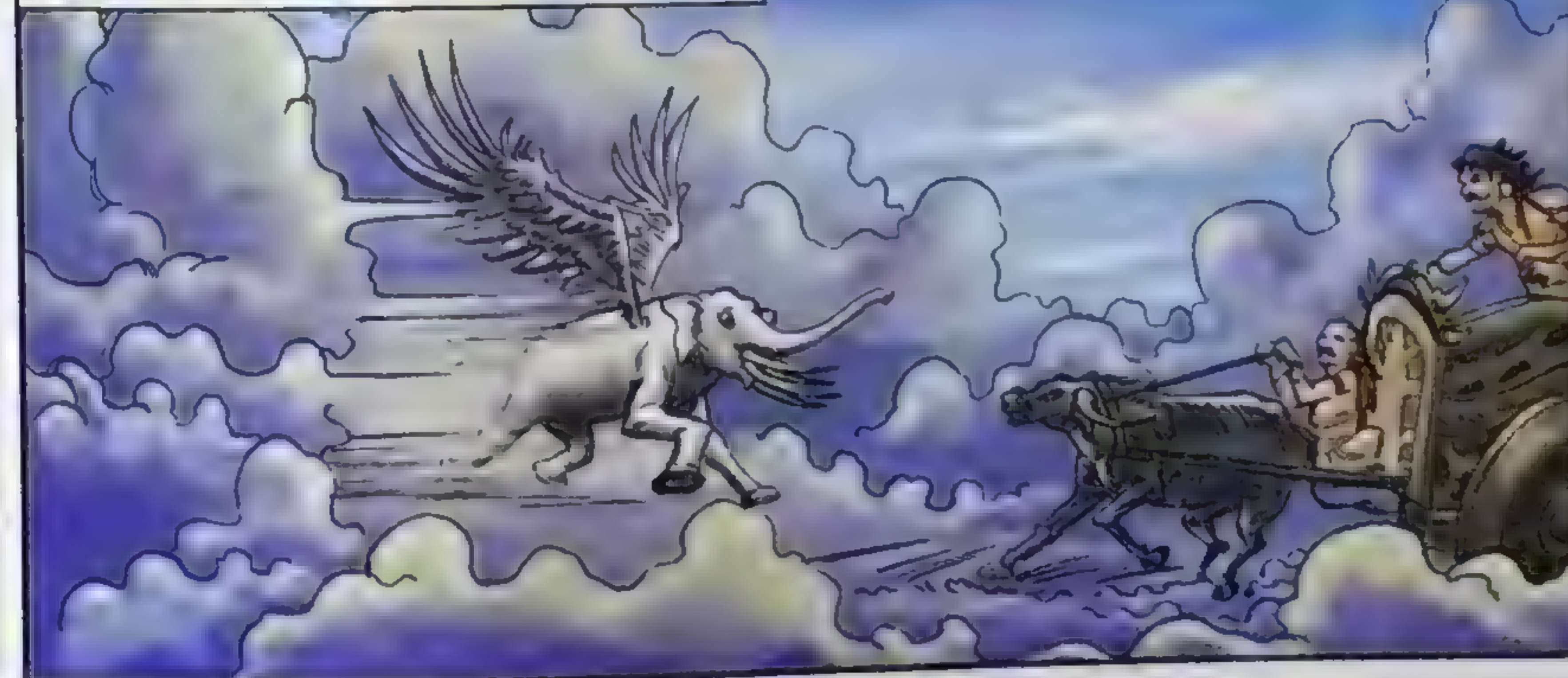
AIRAVATA, WHO WAS ALSO IN THE THICK OF THE BATTLE...



STOPPED FIGHTING WHEN HE SAW JAYANTA FALL



HE CHARGED ANGRILY AT SURAPADMA'S CHARIOT.







AND BEING IN THE MIDDLE



HE THEN TURNED ON SURAPADMA



SURAPADMA STRUCK BACK



AND CUT TWO OF AIRAVATA'S TUSKS



THEN HE THREW AIRAVATA TO THE EARTH BELOW



SEVERAL YEARS PASSED SURAPADMA'S ARMY CONTINUED TO TERRORISE THE GODS



FINALLY, IT WAS PARVATI AND SHIVA'S SON, KARTTIKEYA, WHO CONFRONTED SURAPADMA.

YOUR PATH OF DESTRUCTION IS AT ITS END.



THE BATTLE WAS NOT EASY.

A BOY LIKE YOU CAN'T DEFEAT ME! GIVE UP NOW.



SURAPADMA BEGAN CHANGING HIS FORM TO ESCAPE KARTTIKEYA'S ATTACKS HE TURNED INTO A BIRD



...AND THEN INTO A TREE

THAT WAS A GRAVE MISTAKE, MY FRIEND

KARTTIKEYA SPLIT THE TREE DOWN THE MIDDLE



ONE HALF OF THE TREE BECAME A ROOSTER AND THE OTHER HALF BECAME A PEACOCK

I WILL PLACE YOU ON MY BANNER ROOSTER

AND PEACOCK YOU WILL BE MY VEHICLE





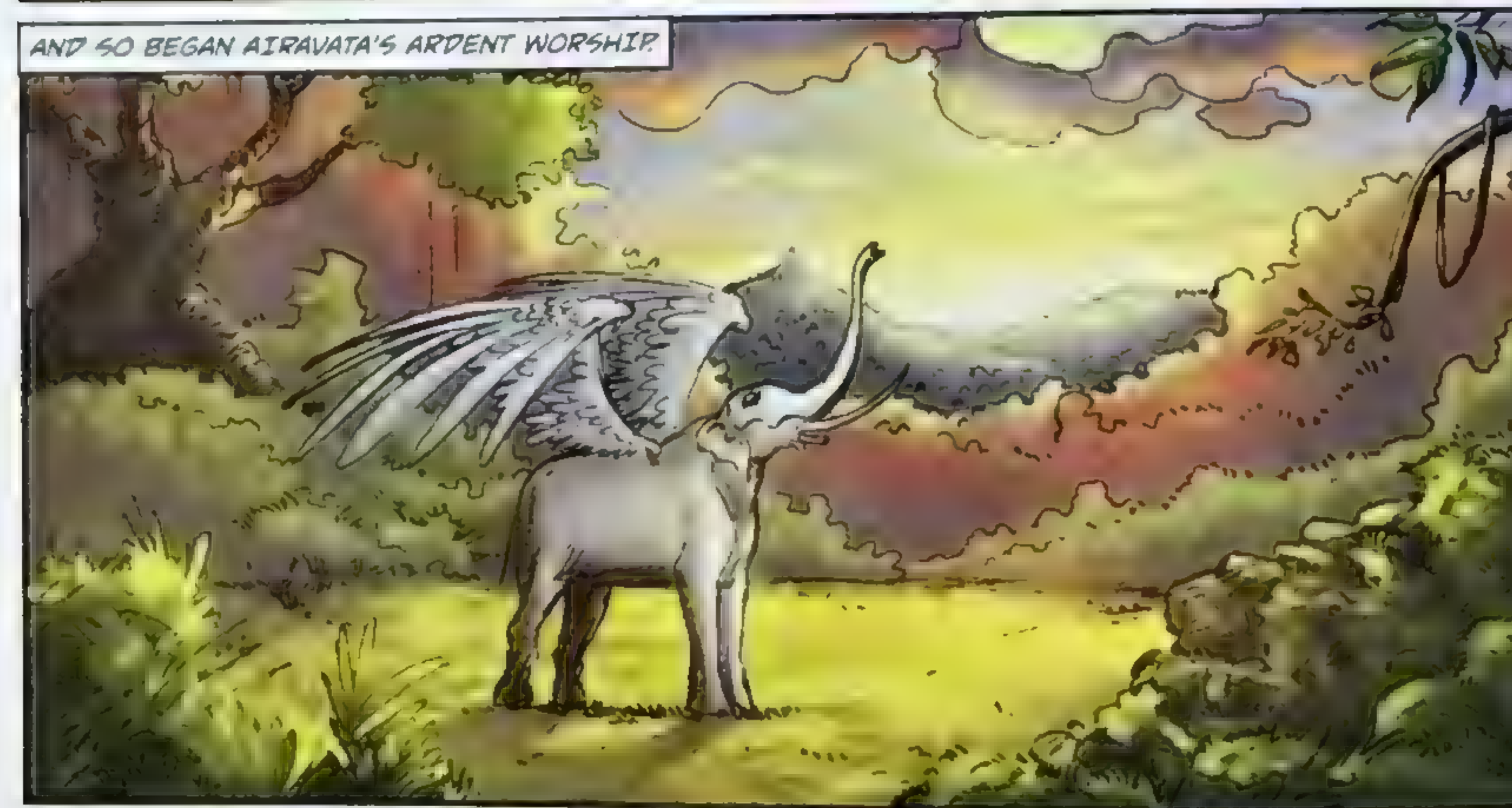
AIRAVATA, WHO HAD BEEN UNCONSCIOUS ALL THIS TIME



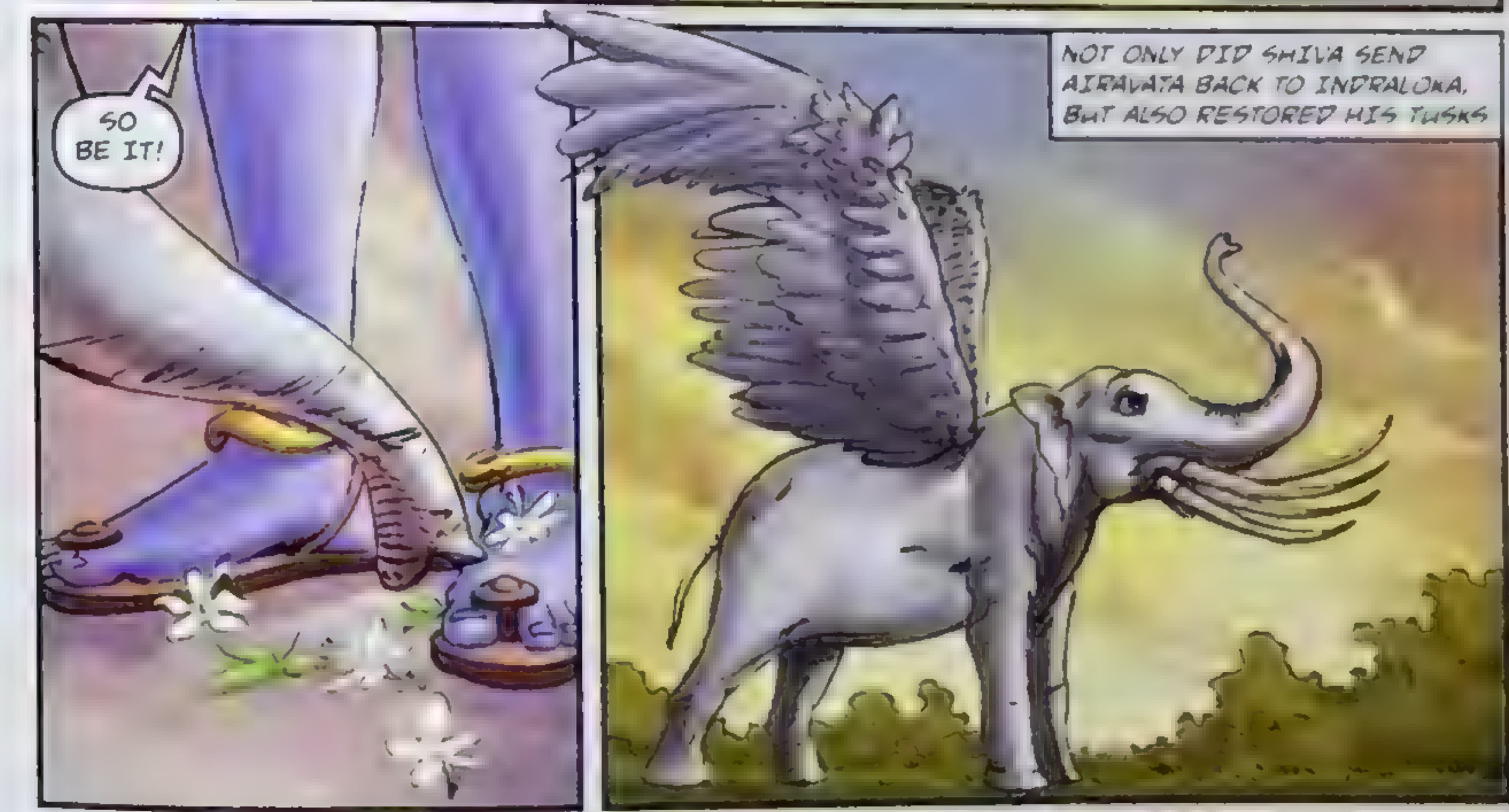
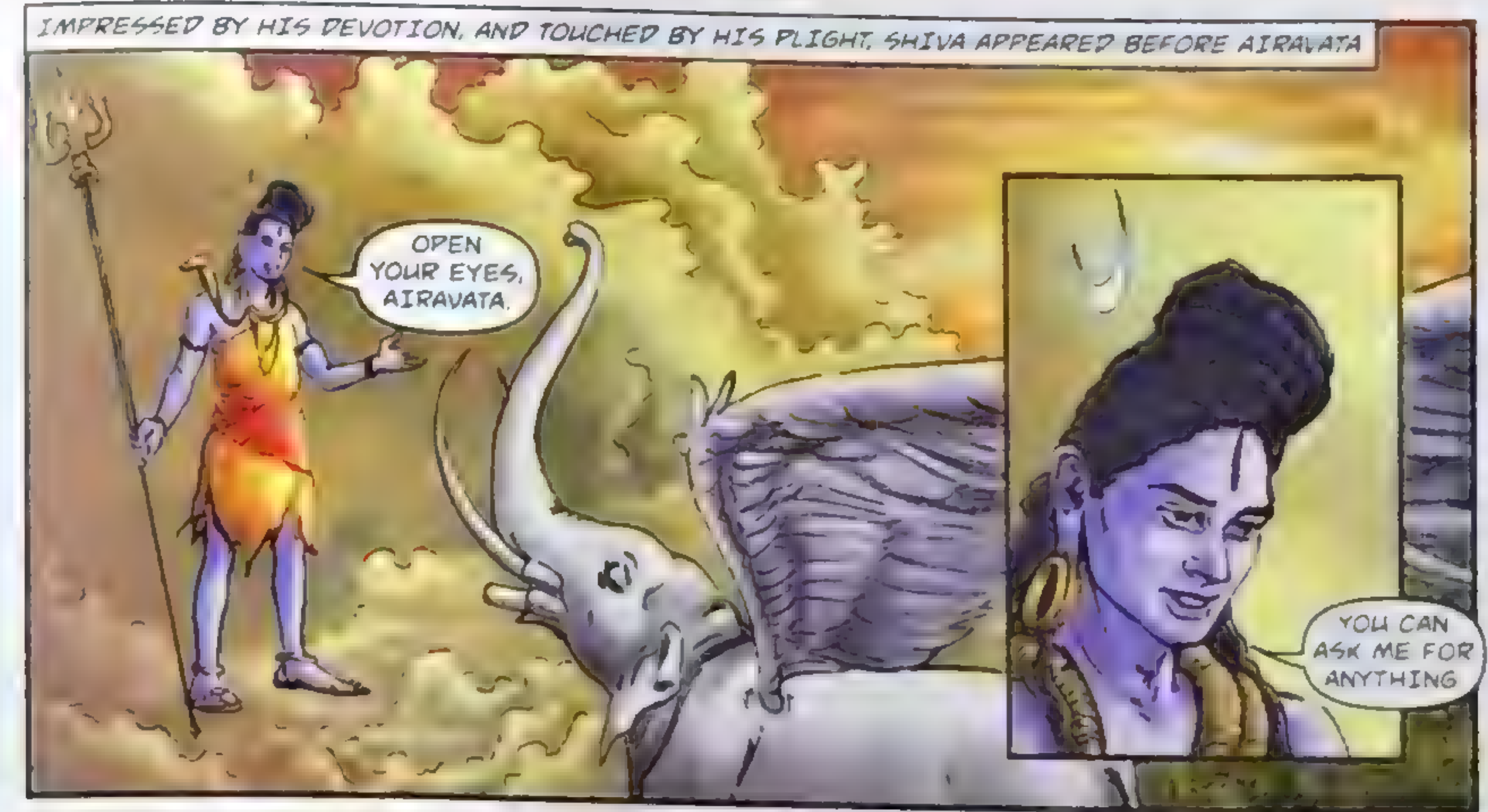
HE OPENED HIS EYES



LOST AND DEFEATED, HE DECIDED TO PRAY TO SHIVA.



AND SO BEGAN AIRAVATA'S ARDENT WORSHIP.





# Airavata



The story in which sixteen elephants emerge from the golden egg is just one version of Airavata's birth. According to the Puranas, Airavata was born to Iravati, a descendant of Kashyapa. On the other hand, *Mahabharata's* *Adi Parva* describes Airavata as being one of the gifts that emerged during the churning of the Ocean of Milk. In this version, although Airavata was born from Iravati, he went into the Ocean of Milk before it was churned and re-emerged during the churning, gaining his white colour in the process.

Another legend says that Airavata helps the rain god by taking water from the oceans and seas and giving it to the clouds, so that it can then be dispersed by Indra as rain.

## GANDABERUNDA AND SHARABHA

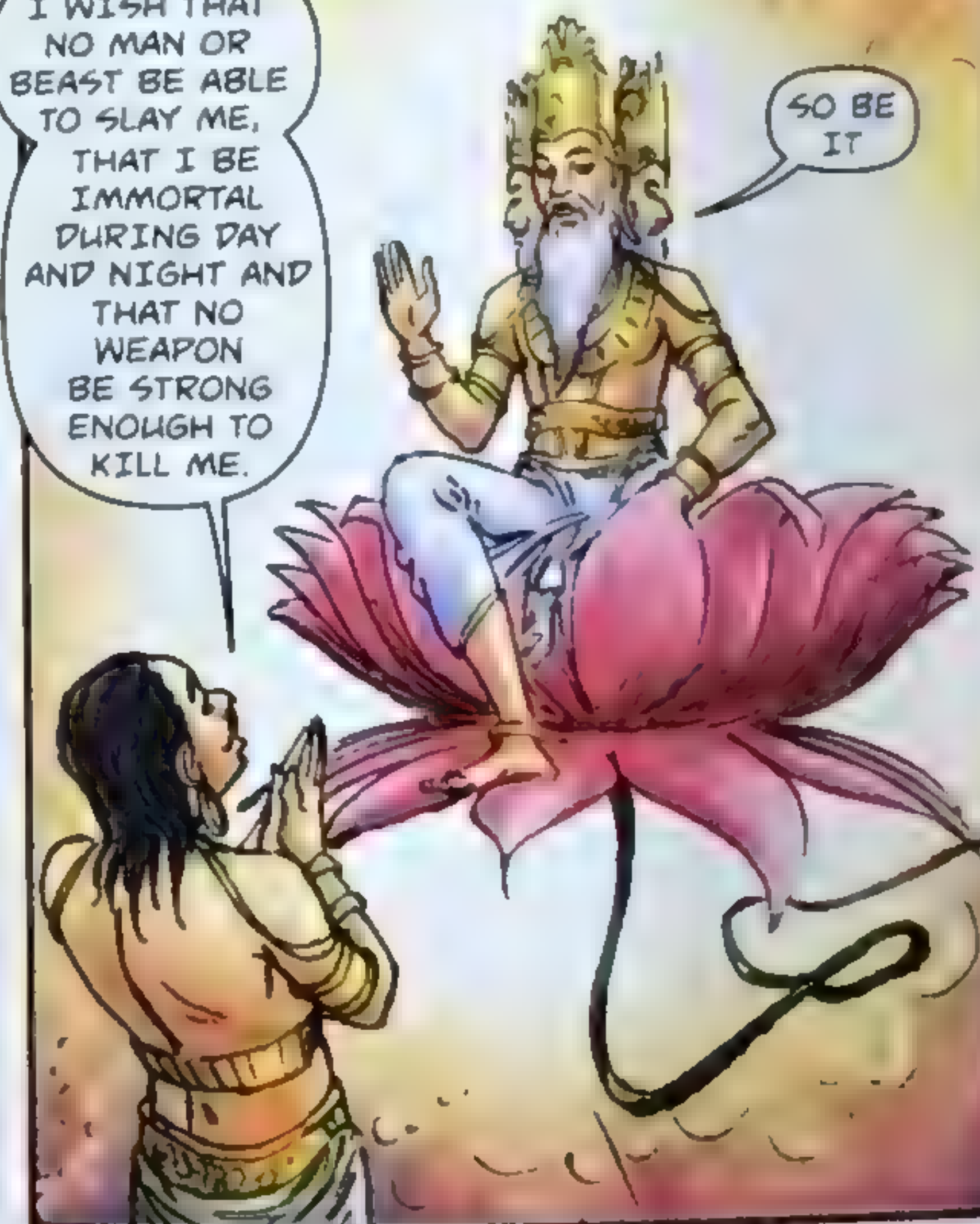
THE EVIL KING HIRANYAKASHAPU HAD JUST BEEN SLAIN BY VISHNU'S FOURTH INCARNATION, NARASIMHA



HIRANYAKASHAPU HAD ONCE ASKED BRAHMA FOR A BOON TO MAKE HIM INVINCIBLE.

I WISH THAT NO MAN OR BEAST BE ABLE TO SLAY ME, THAT I BE IMMORTAL DURING DAY AND NIGHT AND THAT NO WEAPON BE STRONG ENOUGH TO KILL ME.

SO BE IT

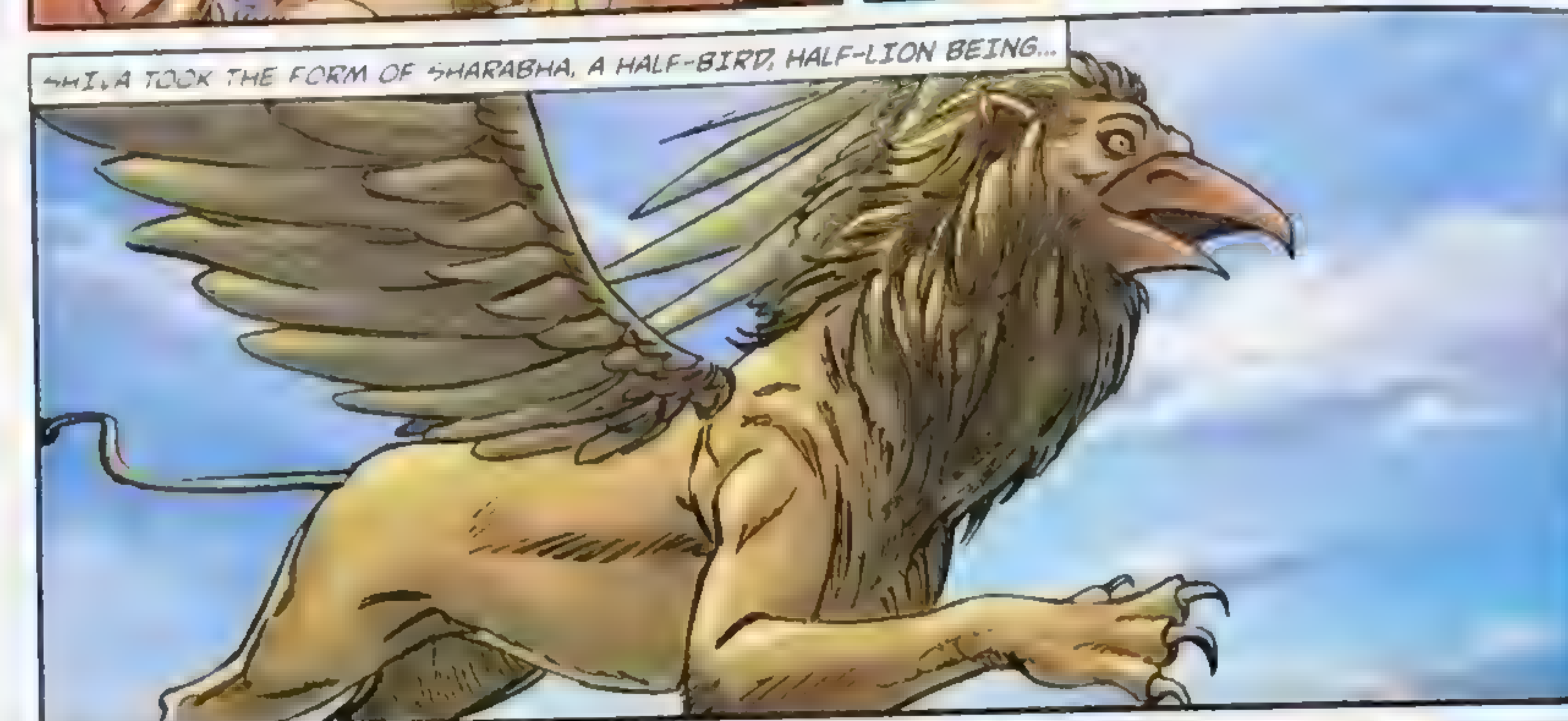


VISHNU'S FORM WAS NEITHER MAN NOR BEAST. NARASIMHA HAD KILLED HIRANYAKASHAPU WITH HIS CLAWS AT DUSK, THUS FINDING A WAY AROUND BRAHMA'S BOON.



AND RIDDING THE WORLD OF THE EVIL KING'S TYRANNY











# Gandaberunda



Gandaberunda, the two-headed bird of unimaginable strength, sits majestically as the official emblem of the Government of Karnataka. Before the Karnataka government adopted Gandaberunda, the mighty bird was the royal insignia of the Wodeyars, a dynasty that ruled the kingdom of Mysore from 1399 to 1947.

Images of this mythical bird have been found carved on the walls of the Chennakeshava temple in Belur, and on coins belonging to the Vijayanagara empire. Gandaberunda is often depicted holding an elephant in each of its talons and is said to signify royalty and power.

In another version of the story, it was Sharabha, and not Gandaberunda, who lost sight of his true mission and started destroying everything in his wake. Narasimha was then forced to take the form of Gandaberunda to curb the chaos Sharabha was causing.

# Navagunjara



This fascinating mythical being finds its mention in Oriya folklore based on the *Mahabharata*. It is believed that once when Arjuna was out hunting, he came across a creature beyond his imagination. It was made up of nine animals! This magnificent creature had the head of a rooster, the neck of a peacock, the hump of a bull, the waist of a lion, legs of a human, an elephant, a deer and a tiger, and with a snake as its tail. Though initially frightened of Navagunjara, Arjuna soon realised that such a being could only be a manifestation of the divine. Arjuna laid down his weapons and saluted the wondrous creature.



# Vahanas - Companions of the Gods



Durga and her tiger

The gods in Indian mythology have vahanas or vehicles on which they ride. These vahanas are their constant companions. They represent the strength and beauty of the deity and at times symbolise various concepts including those that are negative. The negative concepts are those that the gods are said to ride on and overpower.



Yamuna on her tortoise

The more known among the gods and their companions are Vishnu and Garuda, Shiva and Nandi, Brahma and Hamsa, Indra and Airavata, and Ganesha and Moushika.

**Durga** travels on a fierce tiger.

With a pot of water in her hand, **Yamuna** is depicted riding a tortoise.

**Saraswati** rides a swan. It is said that she rode an elephant to Shiva and Parvati's wedding.



Varuna on Jaladhi

**Varuna's** vahana, Jaladhi, was born from Rudra's earwax and has the divine power of movement.

**Shani** rides a crow. It is said that feeding crows is a way to please Shani.

**Surya** rides a chariot drawn by seven white horses.



Lakshmi on Uluka

The **Ashwini Kumaras** are said to ride horses, though the *Rig Veda* also mentions the donkey as their vehicle.

**Kama** and his wife, **Rati**, have the parrot as their vahana. Rati is sometimes shown riding a pigeon.

**Ganga** is said to ride Makara, a creature with the body of a crocodile and the trunk of an elephant.



Ganga on Makara



Kaalratri on her donkey

**Kaalratri**, a form of Kali, rides a donkey.

**Vayu**, the wind god, is depicted riding a deer.

**Paundraka**, the black buffalo ridden by Yama, was born from Rudra's thigh.

The god of wealth **Kubera's** vahana is a man.

**Agni**, the fire god, rides a ram.



# Ananta



**K**ashyapa, one of Brahma's prajapatis, had two wives, Vinata and Kadru. Vinata gave birth to Garuda, and Kadru became the mother of all snakes or Nagas, including Takshaka, Vasuki and Ananta. One day, an argument broke out between Vinata and Kadru over the colour of Airavata's tail. While Vinata insisted that Airavata's tail was pure white, Kadru said that the tail had a few black hairs. (Another version says the argument took place regarding Uchhaisravas' tail.) A wager was placed between Vinata and Kadru to determine the truth. The loser would become the slave of the other for the rest of her life.

Kadru did not want to lose. She went to her serpent sons and told them to suspend themselves from Airavata's tail so it would look like the elephant had black hair. Ananta and a few others refused to be part of this dishonest act. Enraged at the disobedience of her sons, Kadru cursed them. She said that they would die in King Janmejeya's snake sacrifice. Perturbed by his mother's curse, Ananta sought help from Brahma. Brahma told him to go to the netherworld and support Mother Earth on his hood. Ananta readily agreed.

The mighty snake carries the entire world on his hood, maintaining its balance! Ananta is also known as Sheshnag. Vishnu is said to rest on his mighty coils.

# Kamadhenu



**K**amadhenu is the caring and majestic mother of all cattle in the world. Once, on seeing how hard her children on earth were being made to work, she wept with sorrow. Indra saw her weeping and asked her what the matter was. She told him that her children were being beaten and overworked, which caused her great pain.

Touched by her sorrow, Indra commanded the heavens to open and the rain to fall. It poured for days and the water made it impossible for the fields to be ploughed. As a result, Kamadhenu's children got some much-needed rest.

Kamadhenu is said to live in Goloka, a place above heaven, earth and the netherworld. This special abode was given to her by Brahma.